

***Unity, universality, and effectiveness.***  
**The project of reorganization of the *Work of the Propagation of the Faith* discussed  
in Propaganda Fide on January 12, 1920.**

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From the perspective of the history of Catholic missions, the present 2022 marks the anniversaries of institutions dedicated to the work of evangelization: the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples or *Propaganda Fide* (CEP-PF), erected in Rome by Pope Gregory XV<sup>1</sup> in 1622<sup>2</sup>, which celebrates the fourth centenary of its foundation; the *Work for the Propagation of the Faith*, dependent on the work and spirituality of Pauline Jaricot<sup>3</sup>, which commemorates the second centenary of its official foundation in Lyon in 1822. In 1843, it was joined by the *Work of the Holy Childhood* founded by Charles Auguste de Forbin-Janson<sup>4</sup>, and in 1889 by the *Association of St. Peter the Apostle* created by Jeanne and Stephanie Bigard<sup>5</sup>, and finally in 1916 by the *Missionary Union of the Clergy* created by Father Paolo Manna<sup>6</sup>. One hundred years after the beginning of these significant expressions of the reborn missionary movement, the title

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<sup>1</sup> Gregory XV Alexander Ludovisi, 1554-1623. Cf. KOLLER, Alexander, *Gregorio XV*, in *Enciclopedia dei Papi*, III, Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, Roma 2000, pp. 292-297.

<sup>2</sup> At <https://www.vatican.va/content/romancuria/es/congregazioni/congregazione-per-levangelizzazione-dei-popoli/profilo.html> n.1 we read that "With the Bull *Inscrutabili Divinae* (June 22, 1622), issued by Pope Gregory XV, began the constitutive period of this Congregation under the name of *Propaganda Fide* [...]. Its task has always been the propagation of the Faith throughout the world, with the specific competence of coordinating all missionary forces, giving directives for the missions, promoting the formation of the clergy and local hierarchies, encouraging the foundation of new missionary Institutes and, finally, providing material aid for missionary activities. The new Congregation thus became the ordinary and exclusive instrument of the Holy Father and the Holy See through which they exercise their jurisdiction over all missions and missionary cooperation." On the history of the Congregation, among others, METZLER, Josef (ed.), *Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide memoria rerum: 350 years in the service of the Missions: 1622-1972*, III/2 (1815-1972), Herder, Rom-Freiburg-Wien 1976, respectively on pages 655, 662-664 and 804-805. On the congregation as an institution of the Roman Curia: DEL RE, Niccolò, *La Curia romana. Lineamenti storico-giuridici*, LEV, Città del Vaticano 1998 (ed. IV), pp. 146-160.

<sup>3</sup> Pauline Jaricot, 1799-1862. Cf. MASSON, Catherine, *Pauline Jaricot, 1799-1862 Biographie*, Editions du Cerf, Paris 2019; GIACOVELLI, Cecilia, *La donna delle due lampade. Biografia di Paolina Maria Jaricot*, Pontifical Society for the Propagation of the Faith, Rome 1999; <https://www.ppoomm.va/it/chi-siamo/le-4-opere-missionarie/popf/fondatrice-pontificia-opera-propagazione-fede.html>; Jaricot will be beatified in Lyon on May 22, 2022.

<sup>4</sup> Charles Auguste de Forbin-Janson, 1785-1844. Cf. LESOURD, Paul, *Monseigneur de Forbin-Janson, 1785-1844 : évêque de Nancy et de Toul, primat de Lorraine, fondateur de l'Oeuvre de la Sainte Enfance: un grand coeur missionnaire*, Flammarion, Paris 1944.

<sup>5</sup> Jeanne Bigard, 1859-1934. Cf. LESOURD, Paul, *Jeanne Bigard fondatrice della Pontificia Opera di S. Pietro Apostolo per il clero indigeno delle missioni*, Pontificie Opere Missionarie, Roma 1979 [orig. *L'Holocauste de Jeanne Bigard, 1859-1934, fondatrice de l'œuvre pontificale de Saint-Pierre Apôtre*, Plon, Paris 1938]. His mother, Stephanie, also collaborated in the birth of the work. MERLAUD, André, *Deux femmes à la pointe de la mission: Stéphanie et Jeanne Bigard*, Éditions S.O.S., Paris 1980.

<sup>6</sup> Paolo Manna, 1872-1952. Cf. GHEDDO, Piero, *Paolo Manna (1872-1952). Founder of the Pontifical Missionary Union*, EMI, Bologna 2001.

of *Pontifical* will be attributed to the first three by Pope Pius XI<sup>7</sup> in 1922<sup>8</sup> and to the fourth by Pope Pius XII<sup>9</sup> in 1956<sup>10</sup>.

Dedicated to missionary animation and cooperation, these *works* have since become known as the *Pontifical Mission Societies (PMS)*<sup>11</sup> and 2022 is also a significant anniversary for them.

This contribution deals with a particular moment in the life and development of the first of the four OPM. The aim is to re-examine the situation of the *Work for the*

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<sup>7</sup> Pius XI Ambrogio Damiano Achille Ratti, 1857-1939. Cf. MARGIOTTA BROGLIO, Francesco, *Pius XI*, *Enciclopedia dei Papi*, III, Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, Rome 2000, pp. 617-632.

<sup>8</sup> PIUS XI, Motu proprio *Romanorum Pontificum "De Opere a Propagatione Fidei amplificando"* (May 3, 1922), in AAS XIV (1922), pp. 321-330; also in: *Sylloge praecipuorum documentorum recentium summorum pontificum et S. Congregationis de Propaganda Fide necnon aliarum SS. Congregationum romanarum*, Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, Civitas Vaticana 1939, pp. 672-682; PONTIFICIA OPERA DELLA PROPAGAZIONE DELLA FEDE, *La propagazione della fede nel mondo*, Num. 1, Anno 1, Propaganda Fide, Rome 1923, pp. 88-92.

<sup>9</sup> Pius XII Eugenio Maria Giuseppe Giovanni Pacelli, 1876-1958. Cf. TRANIELLO, Francesco, *Pius XII*, in DBI 84 (2005), pp. 58-69; ID. *Pius XII*, in *Encyclopedia of the Popes*, III, pp. 632-644.

<sup>10</sup> The decree was issued after the Audience granted by the Pontiff on October 23, 1956: *Ex audientia SS.mi 23. 1956. S.S. Pius XII appellationem tribuit "Pontificiam" Unioni Cleri pro Missionibus*, in LES ŒUVRES PONTIFICALES MISSIONAIRES, *Documents EMI par le Saint-Siege. 1823-1982*, edited by BENEVENUTI, M. s.e. s.l., n.d., pp. 440-441; Pontificie Opere MISSIONARIE, DIREZIONE NAZIONALE, *Le Pontificie Opere Missionarie in alcune interventi e documenti della Santa Sede*, edited by CAVALLO, Pasquale, provisional draft, s.l., n.d., n.d., pp. 440-441. [1996?], pp. 285-286.

<sup>11</sup> At the end of November 1919, Pope Benedict XV underlined their importance in his Apostolic Letter *Maximum illud* to the Patriarchs, Primates, Archbishops and Bishops of the Catholic world on the activity carried out by missionaries in the world, 30 November 1919, in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 11 (1919), pp. 440-455;

[https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xv/es/apost\\_letters/documents/hf\\_ben-xv\\_apl\\_19191130\\_maximum-illud.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xv/es/apost_letters/documents/hf_ben-xv_apl_19191130_maximum-illud.html) On Missionary Cooperation and Associations according to data updated to 1925 and 1934 respectively: ARENS, Bernard, *Manuel des missions catholiques*, Museum Lessianum, Louvain-Paris-Brussels 1925, pp. 278-294 *Les Associations en faveur des Missions* and pp. 295-351 *le Tableaux des Associations en faveur des Missions*; SACRA CONGREGAZIONE DI PROPAGANDA FIDE, *Guida delle missioni cattoliche*, Unione Missionaria del Clero in Italia, Roma 1934, pp. 497-514 *Cooperazione Missionaria - Parte generale*. In today's PP.OO.MM see <https://www.ppoomm.va/es/celebriamo-il-2022.html> and <https://www.ppoomm.va/es/documentazioni.html> The objectives are expressed in CONGREGATIO PRO GENTIUM EVANGELIZATIONE, *Guida delle Missioni Cattoliche*, Tipografia Vaticana, Roma 2015, p. 16 where, among other things, we read: " Purpose. Founded in the Churches of ancient Christianity to support the work of missionaries among non-Christian peoples, the PP.OO.MM. have become an institution of the universal Church and of each particular Church. According to the Council, they must occupy a central place in missionary cooperation. They constitute a single institution comprising four distinct branches. They have in common the primary and principal purpose of promoting the missionary and universal spirit within the People of God. [...]". On the same subject, but with different and complementary approaches and historiographical interests: ZAMPETTI, Giovanni, *Le Pontificie Opere Missionarie*, in METZLER, Josef (ed.), *Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide memoria rerum: 350 anni a servizio delle Missioni: 1622-1972*, III/2 (1815-1972), Herder, Rom-Freiburg-Wien 1976, pp. 413-449; ILUNGA MUYA, Juvénal, (ed.), *Le Pontificie Opere Missionarie. Statuti, Storia e Teologia*, in *Euntes Docete. Commentaria Urbaniana N.S.*, I, UUP, Vatican City 2006; TREVISIOL, Alberto, *Profilo storico delle Pontificie Opere Missionarie. Dalle differenti origini all'unione, al cammino in comunione*, in MOSCA, Vincenzo (ed.), *Le Pontificie opere missionarie. Storia - Legislazione - Prassi*, Urbaniana University Press, Vatican City 2012, pp. 15-36; MAGLIE, Rocco, *Spiritualità missionaria delle Pontificie Opere Missionarie*, Estratto della Tesi di Dottorato nella Facoltà di Missiologia, Pontificia Università Urbaniana, Roma 2012; DAL TOSO, Giovanni P., *Le Pontificie Opere Missionarie alla luce di Benedetto XV e Francesco a "riqualificare evangelicamente" l'attività missionaria ad gentes*, in MERONI, Fabrizio - SILEO, Leonardo (edd.), *Dalla Maximum Illud alla Evangelii Gaudium. Sull'urgenza della trasformazione missionaria della Chiesa*, Urbaniana University Press, Vatican City 2021, pp. 49-62.

*Propagation of the Faith* (OPF) in the light of the reorganization project drawn up in Propaganda Fide by the Prefect Card. Willem Marinus Van Rossum<sup>12</sup> in the last years of the pontificate of Benedict XV<sup>13</sup>, a century after the foundation of the work initiated by Jaricot; contained in the Ponencia assigned to Cardinal Rafael Merry del Val<sup>14</sup>, this project would be the object of evaluation and deliberation at the Plenary Meeting of the Cardinals of Propaganda on January 12, 1920.

Several studies have previously been devoted to the subject, such as those by Emma Tedde and Stefano Trinchese in 1999<sup>15</sup> and Richard Drevet's doctoral thesis in 2002, with the publication of an article in the same year<sup>16</sup>. The present contribution therefore follows

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<sup>12</sup> Willem Marinus van Rossum C.S.S.R., 1854-1932. Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation of Propaganda Fide from March 12, 1918 to August 30, 1932, but appointed member of Propaganda Fide for the Latin and Eastern Rites on January 19, 1912. See *Hierarchia Catholica medii et recentioris aevi*, IX (1903-1922), Typis Librariae "Il Messaggero di S. Antonio", Patavii 2002, pp. 12 and 22; PRUDHOMME, Claude, *Le Cardinal van Rossum et la politique missionnaire du Saint-Siège sous Benoît XV et Pie XI (1918-1932)*, in POELS, Vefie et alii (eds.), *Life with a mission: cardinal Willem Marinus van Rossum C.Ss.R. (1854-1932)*, Redactie Trajecta, Leuven 2011, pp. 124-141; POELS, Vefie, *De rode paus. Biografie van de Nederlandse curiekardinaal Willem van Rossum CSsR (1854-1932)*, Valkhof Pers, Nijmegen 2021. "Van Rossum Willem Marinus. Born in Zwolle (Netherlands) in 1854, he joined the Redemptorists at the age of nineteen and was ordained a priest in 1879. Professor of dogmatics in various schools of his own religious congregation, in 1894 he was called to Rome as Consultor to the General Curia. Appointed consultor to the Holy Office in 1896, he held various positions in the Curia and in 1911 Pius X created him a cardinal. In 1918 he was elected by Benedict XV as prefect of the Congregation of Propaganda Fide and in the same year he was appointed and ordained bishop with the archiepiscopal title of Caesarea Mauritanica, occupying the prefecture of Propaganda until his death in Maastricht on August 30, 1932": PAGANO, Sergio et alii (edd.), *I 'Fogli Udienza' del Cardinale Eugenio Pacelli Segretario di Stato*, I (1930), Archivio Segreto Vaticano, Città del Vaticano 2010, p. 500.

<sup>13</sup> Giacomo Giambattista Della Chiesa, 1854-1922. Pontiff under the name Benedict XV in the years 1914-1922. Cf. *Hierarchia Catholica medii et recentioris aevi*, IX, pp. 14-16; DE ROSA, Gabriele, *Benedetto XV*, in *Enciclopedia dei Papi*, III, Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana Roma 2000, pp. 608-617. On the papacy, see also: SCOTTÀ, Antonio, *Papa Benedetto XV. La Chiesa, la grande guerra, la pace (1914-1922)*, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, Roma 2009; MELLONI, Alberto (dir.), *Benedetto XV. Papa Giacomo Della Chiesa nel mondo dell'"inutile strage"*, edited by Giovanni CAVAGNINI - Giulia GROSSI, 2 volumes, Il Mulino, Bologna 2017.

<sup>14</sup> Rafael Merry del Val y Zulueta, 1865-1930. *Hierarchia Catholica medii et recentioris aevi*, IX, p. 8. "Merry del Val Rafael. Born in London in 1865, son of the Spanish minister to the Holy See, he did his early studies in England; having shown an inclination for the priestly life, he was sent to Rome for theological training. In 1885 he entered the Academy of Noble Ecclesiastics and was ordained priest in 1888. In 1897, not yet ordained bishop, he was sent as apostolic delegate to Canada; in 1900 he received the episcopal appointment and was consecrated with the archiepiscopal title of Nicaea. In 1903 he was appointed Secretary of State by the newly elected Pope Pius X and was elevated to the purple in the consistory of November of the same year, working with Pope Sarto until his death in 1914. He then held the offices of Archpriest of the Vatican Basilica, Prefect of the Congregation of the Fabric of St. Peter's and Secretary of the Congregation of the Holy Office. He died in the Vatican in 1930": PAGANO, Sergio et alii (edd.), *I "Fogli Udienza" del Cardinale Eugenio Pacelli Segretario di Stato*, I, (1930), Archivio Segreto Vaticano, Vatican City 2010, p. 456.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. TEDDE, Emma, *Propagazione della fede e riorganizzazione delle missioni (1919-1922)*, in GIOVAGNOLI, Agostino (ed.), *Roma e Pechino. La svolta extraeuropea di Benedetto XV*, Edizioni Studium, Roma 1999, pp. 145-170. Based on the documentation preserved in the APF, the contribution published by Tedde has historically framed this project, conceived and carried out by the Prefect of Propaganda Card. Van Rossum in the contemporary perspective of Roman centralization; TRINCHESE, Stefano, *Il coordinamento romano delle opere missionarie*, in GIOVAGNOLI, Agostino (ed.), *Roma e Beijing. La svolta extraeuropea di Benedetto XV*, pp. 129-144, pointed out the fading of the paternalistic stamp given to the French headquarters by the presence of representatives of the bourgeois world of high finance and the army.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. DREVET, Richard, *Laiques de France et missions catholiques au XIXe siècle: l'Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi, origines et développement lyonnais (1822-1922)*, PhD thesis (Claude Prudhomme

the historiographical path already traced and is divided into the following parts: First, the archival references of the Pontifical Conference and the documentation it contains are noted; then the beginnings of the OPF are briefly presented and the support given by the popes is pointed out in the light of some pontifical documents granting spiritual graces to the ascribed members, the *Nota d'Archivio* and the *Brevi notizie sulla Opera Pia*. Thirdly, by going through the *Report of the Pontifical Council* through the exposition of the most salient passages, the aim is to grasp the project of reorganization of the OPF elaborated in Propaganda and to present the deliberations taken by the cardinals gathered in Plenary Assembly, subsequently confirmed by Pope Pius XI. Finally, the presentation of the two visions that led to the formulation of the deliberations and anticipate some conclusive considerations.

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dir.), Université Lyon 2, 2002; DREVET, Richard, *Le financement des missions catholiques au XIXème siècle, entre autonomie laïque et centralité romaine. L'Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi (1822-1922)*, in *Chrétiens et Sociétés XVIe-XXIe siècles* 9 (2002), pp. 79-114, <https://doi.org/10.4000/chretienssocietes.4004> speaks of Romanization, clericalization and centralization to the detriment of the lay element.

## **Presentation on the *Project for the Reorganization of the Pious Work for the Propagation of the Faith.***

The Ponzenza is preserved in the *Acta Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide* collection<sup>17</sup> of the Historical Archives of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples or *Propaganda Fide* (APF) and the title of the cover contains the essential data: "Ponzenza N. 20/1919, Prot. N. 3268, December 1919, Sacra Congregazione de Propaganda Fide, Ponente l'Eminentissimo e Reverendissimo Signor Cardinale Raffaele Merry del Val, "Relazione con Sommario e Nota d'Archivio. Circa un progetto di riorganizzazione della Pia Opera della Propagazione della Fede"<sup>18</sup>.

The 170 sheets printed *front* and *back* contain a *Report*, a *Summary*, and an appended *Note from the Archives of the Congregation*, in addition to other copious documentation, including the *Brief News on the Pious Work*.

For the sake of completeness, it is necessary to add to the archival references to the Paper in the *Acta* fonds the reference to the *Nuova Serie (NS)* fonds, since the entire

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<sup>17</sup> The papers on the "most important questions" are preserved in it: PAVENTI, Javier M., *Prassi della S.C. de Propaganda Fide*, in *Misiones extranjerias* II/5 (1950), p. 1.

<sup>18</sup> APF, *Acta*, an. 1919, vol. 290, ff. 376r-546v [original, printed]: "Ponzenza N. 20/1919, Prot. N. 3268, Dicembre 1919, Sacra Congregazione de Propaganda Fide, Ponente l'Eminentissimo e Reverendissimo Signor Cardinale Raffaele Merry del Val, "Relazione con Sommario e Nota d'Archivio. Circa un progetto di riorganizzazione della Pia Opera della Propagazione della Fede"." On f. 376r [handwritten]: "Reported on January 12, 1920". The foliation of the fundamental parts is given below:

ff. 376r-410v: *Relazione* with summary and archival note;

ff. 411r-412r: Doubts and answers [Hoja de audiencia, mns;].

ff. 413r-435v: *Sommario* [contains 12 documents];

ff. 436r-449r: *Nota d'Archivio* [I. Origin and development of the Pious Work of the Propagation of the Faith; II. The Pious Work of the Propagation of the Faith and the Supreme Pontiffs; III. The Pious Work for the Propagation of the Faith and the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda. Repeated attempts at autonomy by the various national councils of the Work];

ff. 450r-501r: Documents [contains 67 documents];

ff. 502r-507v: *Regolamento del Consiglio Centrale per l'Italia della Pia Opera Internazionale della Propagazione della Fede in Roma*, Tip. Artigianelli, Rome 1897 [Booklet];

f. 508r: *Opera Pia della Propagazione della Fede in Roma* [printed, membership sheet, Rome, n.d.];

ff. 509r-512v: *Brevi notizie* on the Work of the Propagation of the Faith in Rome [original, mns., Rome, November 12, 1919, signed by Giuseppe Amici Serra];

ff. 514r-525 and 539r-540v: *Jahresbericht des Franziskus Xaverius - Missionvereins 1918* [statistical brochure] and some letters;

ff. 526r-538v: *Brevi notizie sobre la Obra Pía de la Propagación de la Fe a favor de las Misiones Extranjeras en los dos mundos*, a Compendium of the book printed in Lyon in the year 1837 addressed especially to the faithful of the Church of Rome, with inclusion of analogous reflections and answers to various difficulties, edited by Giuseppe Gismondi, typographer of the Propagation of the Faith, Rome 1840. [booklet].

It is followed by ff. 541r-546v [as a supplement to the paper]: *Note destined to His Eminence Cardinal Cardinal Préf. de la Propagande et à Son Eminence le Cardinal Préfet de la Congrégation pour l'Eglise Orientale au sujet des difficultés actuelles de l'Oeuvre de la Propagation de la Foi, remise à Paris, le 24 October 1919, à Son Eminence le Cardinal Légat par l'Amiral de la Jaille et M. le Curé de Saint-Sulpice a un nom des Conseils Centraux de Lyon et de Paris* [November 1919]; at the beginning, on f. 541r, it is indicated that a "new Note on behalf of the Central Councils of Lyon and Paris concerning this project [of reorganization of the OPF] was communicated to the Prefect of Propaganda. We thought it opportune to present it for the information of Your Eminences, and it is reproduced here in full in printed form, as a supplement to the above-mentioned letter. Since two important factual inaccuracies have been found in the Note, they have been indicated in their place and corrected with the corresponding documents."

volume 731 contains the original documentation, handwritten and typewritten, which was later included, although not in its entirety, in the text of the Paper<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> See APF, *NS*, an. 1922, vol. 731.

## 2. The Work of the Propagation of the Faith: first steps and support of the Popes according to the *Note from the Archives* and the *Brief News on the Pious Work*.

L'Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi was born from the union of two Lyonnais associations dedicated to supporting the missions: the first for the evangelization of Louisiana in North America, founded by the widow Petit Meurville at the suggestion of Bishop Louis Du Bourg, a missionary of the Priests of Saint Sulpice and Bishop of Louisiana (Saint Louis of New Orleans)<sup>20</sup>, who was passing through Lyon. The second was founded by Pauline Jaricot at the suggestion of her brother Philéas, a student at the Seminary of Saint Sulpice in Paris, who in a letter invited his sister to found in Lyon "an association which, complementing that which was re-established in Paris, would not only be an association of prayers, but also of almsgiving for the missions [in the Orient]"<sup>21</sup>. The idea was well received by Pauline and in 1820 the organization began to find its first members among the spinners of Lyon. Pauline Jaricot, probably inspired by the weekly collection system of the English Anabaptists, had proposed a weekly contribution of *five cents*, a sum possible for each person both in terms of money and fidelity.

From the merger decided at the meeting held in Lyon on May 3, 1822, of "two institutions with particular aims, and restricted to a specific category of individuals, the Pious Work for the Propagation of the Faith was born, which from the beginning had a general, international and universal character"<sup>22</sup>. In the *Brevi notizie sull'Opera Pia*, a compendium on the OPF published in Rome in 1840, it was stated: "It was founded in Lyon on May 3, 1822, under the title *Opera della Propagazione della Fede (Work for the Propagation of the Faith)* to help the workers of the Gospel and the poor neophytes, as well as the faithful exposed to the ravages of persecution. It is a truly apostolic work of charity"<sup>23</sup>.

The Work thus embraced the missions scattered throughout the world, both in the West and in the East, as indicated in its *Regulations*.<sup>24</sup> It supported missionaries and neophytes, often persecuted for their faith. Its universality (catholicity) was also manifested in the fact that it was open to all the faithful, men and women, rich and poor, most of whom were lay people.

The new missionary institution inherited from the Jaricot association, the only one of the two that had a regular and innovative organization, some simple, clear, and feasible ideas:

"the idea of grouping the attached members into decurias, centurias and chiliarquias, with each section headed by a person responsible for collecting the alms of his group; the idea of a weekly offering reduced to the modest sum of five cents for each member, so that even the poorest could belong to the association and enjoy its benefits and spiritual merits; the idea of distributing the proceeds of the alms collected among the missions according to their needs;

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<sup>20</sup> Louis-Guillaume-Valentin Du Bourg, PSS, 1766-1833. Cf. *Hierarchia Catholica medii et recentioris aevi*, VIII (1800-1846), Typis Librariae "Il Messaggero di S. Antonio", Patavii 1968, p. 286.

<sup>21</sup> APF, *Minutes*, an. 1919, vol. 290, f. 437r.

<sup>22</sup> APF, *Minutes*, an. 1919, vol. 290, f. 438v.

<sup>23</sup> *Brevi notizie sull'Opera Pia*, p. 3; APF, *Acta*, an. 1919, vol. 290, f. 528r.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. APF, *Acta*, an. 1919, vol. 290, f. 438v. The *Règlement* was published in the *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi* III (1824), pp. 31ff.

the idea of inviting members to help the missions not only with their offerings but also with their prayers"<sup>25</sup> .

Support for the missionaries and the work of evangelization that they carried out in the Catholic missions throughout the world was based, therefore, on the charity of the faithful lived in the form of almsgiving of prayer and almsgiving of money, that is, of *spiritual* and *corporal almsgiving*,<sup>26</sup> . Spiritual and material charity was thus the foundation of lay missionary spirituality, as simple in its daily application as it was genuinely Catholic in its universal dimensions, in which its members were educated. The prayer to be recited daily in the morning and evening was a *Pater* and *Ave* with the addition of the invocation *Saint-François-Xavier, priez pour nous* (St. Francis Xavier, pray for us), as established by the *Règlement* in its article XIII. Of the alms given for the missions and of its religious and spiritual foundation it was written that "it is not simple alms, but according to the Holy Spirit it is something that even cleanses us from all iniquity (Tobit 4:11), it is an alms qualified by a most noble and most profitable addition, that is, directed to the maintenance of the saints [the missionaries], and to the conversion of the infidels. Oh, the good that these modest allowances will bring to you and your families. You scatter a seed, but your harvest will multiply without end. The land in which you sow has the blessings of heaven"<sup>27</sup> .

One of the main means of propaganda of the association was the *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*. The *Annales* were born from the letters and reports that the missionaries wrote from the distant mission territories, and, in fact, the first fascicles were presented as a continuation of the *Lettres édifiantes et rares* that had been published for years in Lyon. In time, the *Annals* were translated into several languages: Italian, Spanish, English, German, etc.<sup>28</sup> It was a publication that, from the beginning, was of great importance because the communication allowed an exchange that strengthened the bonds of faith and communion among the faithful (in Lyon and in the Mission), constituted an important cultural contribution of a Christian character and, not a secondary aspect for the Church and the missions, contributed to arouse missionary vocations among the readers and among those who, while still children or young people, read or listened to the testimonies.

Another fundamental element for the development of the Work in the century of its foundation was the support given by the Pontiffs, both by confirming the Work and pointing out its goodness to the bishops of the Church (with encomiums, encyclicals, etc.), and by supporting and encouraging the members by granting, through the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences, spiritual graces such as the partial or plenary indulgence, which meant "remission of the temporal punishment caused by sin" , a gift considered important by those who considered the Work important. Congregation of Indulgences, spiritual graces such as the partial or plenary indulgence, which meant the "remission of

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<sup>25</sup> APF, *Minutes*, an. 1919, vol. 290, f. 438v.

<sup>26</sup> The *Brevi notizie sull'Opera Pia* indicated *spiritual alms* and *corporal alms*: *Brevi notizie sull'Opera Pia*, p. 22; APF, *Acta*, an. 1919, vol. 290, f. 537v.

<sup>27</sup> *Brevi notizie sull'Opera Pia*, pp. 18-19; APF, *Acta*, an. 1919, vol. 290, ff. 535v-536r.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. APF, *Acta*, an. 1919, vol. 290, ff. 451v-452v; *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi* III (1824), pp. 31ff.



the temporal punishment caused by sin"<sup>29</sup>, a gift considered important by those who were concerned about their own spiritual salvation and that of their loved ones. This aspect linked to eternal salvation was fundamental in the life of the members and in the development of the Work, an ecclesial reality characterized by the lay element and defined by the missionary horizon for the *salus animarum* of those who had not yet received the proclamation of the Gospel. The following is a list of the most significant interventions of the Popes<sup>30</sup>.

Pius VII, by means of a rescript (1823), granted members in France the possibility of obtaining a plenary indulgence on two feasts, Inventio Sanctae Crucis (May 3, the day of the foundation of the OPF) and St. Francis Xavier (December 3, chosen as Patron of the OPF).

Leo XII with a rescript (1824) granted to sick members the possibility of gaining the indulgences granted by his predecessor without the obligation to visit the parish church or the oratory where the OPF was founded.

Pius VIII, by means of a rescript (1829), dispensed from the obligation to visit the parish church or the association's own oratory to members who lived in places *where there was no society of piety*, and granted them the possibility of gaining the aforementioned indulgences by visiting any church.

Gregory XVI, who as Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda Fide had already supported the OPF, granted non-French members the possibility of canonical membership in the OPF and extended the indulgences and spiritual graces granted to the Society to the faithful throughout the Catholic world (1831); extended the time for gaining indulgences attached to the octave of the two feasts of the OPF (1835); established that indulgences gained by members could also be applied to the deceased (1836); through the Cardinal Vicar invited the clergy and people of Rome to enroll in the Work and created a Central Council of the OPF for the dioceses of the Papal States (1838); In virtue of the discovery of the body of the martyr St. Exuperius in the catacombs of St. Callixtus, he sent his remains in an urn to Lyon, instituting a special feast in which those enrolled could gain an indulgence by visiting the altar of the martyr (1839). Through the Encyclical *Probe Nostis* (1840) he recommended the OPF to the entire Catholic world and designated it as one of the principal means of the Catholic apostolate, thus giving a strong impetus to the development of the Work of Jaricot.

Pius IX with the decree *Cum pia* confirmed the concessions of his predecessors and recommended the Work to all Catholic bishops (1847); with the decree *Cum scopus*

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<sup>29</sup> MORONI ROMANO, Gaetano, *Dizionario di erudizione storico-ecclesiastica da S. Pietro sino ai nostri giorni*, XXXII, Tipografia Emiliana, Venezia 1845, pp. 267-290. "This remission of the temporal punishment due for sins, forgiven already as far as guilt is concerned, was designated by the name "indulgence". This indulgence has something in common with the other forms established to remove the consequences of sins, but, at the same time, there are reasons that distinguish it perfectly. For in indulgence the Church, using her power as the administrator of Christ's redemption, not only asks, but authoritatively grants to the faithful who are suitably disposed, the treasure of the satisfactions of Christ and the saints for the remission of temporal punishment. The end proposed by ecclesiastical authority in the granting of indulgences consists not only in helping the faithful to wash away the penalties due, but also in inciting them to perform works of piety, penance and charity, especially those which contribute to the increase of faith and the common good. "PAUL VI, *Indulgentiarum Doctrinam* (1967), n. 8. See also *Enchiridion indulgentiarum*, LEV, Vatican City 1986. Cf: [https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/es/apost\\_constitutions/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_apc\\_01011967\\_indulgentiarum-doctrina.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/es/apost_constitutions/documents/hf_p-vi_apc_01011967_indulgentiarum-doctrina.html)

<sup>30</sup> For more details, see the already mentioned LES ŒUVRES PONTIFICALES MISSIONAIRES, *Documents EMI par le Saint-Siege. 1823-1982* and *Pontificie Opere Missionarie*, DIREZIONE NAZIONALE, *Le Pontificie Opere Missionarie in alcuni interventi e documenti della Santa Sede*.

*praeclarae* indulgences could be earned regardless of the amount given in alms (1851); extended the same indulgences to children enrolled in the Work with the sole duty of approaching sacramental confession (1855); to the priest *collectors* or *zealots* of the Work he granted various graces and spiritual privileges, among which was the personal indult of the privileged altar (1871). During the First Ecumenical Vatican Council, some bishops asked the Pope for a further word of support and encouragement for the Work, which, although it was working hard, was not achieving the diffusion and results that the Protestants were obtaining at that time.

Leo XIII responded to the Council's request by publishing two encyclicals, *Sancta Dei Civitas* (1880) and *Christi Nomen* (1894), and indicated the OPF to the faithful throughout the world as the most important of all Catholic missionary works, recommending that the bishops take care of it and spread it.

In his Brief *In Apostolicum subiecti*, Pius X pointed to the OPF as the main institution that Providence had raised up in the Church for the spread of the Kingdom of God and as an eminently Catholic work (1904).

The entire activity of the *Work for the Propagation of the Faith* was born of the Christian life woven of faith and charity of the faithful who were part of it, a life nourished by the *spiritual fruits* generated by the support given to the missionary dimension, as Gregory XVI had admiringly pointed out, almost twenty years after its foundation, as the conclusion of his Encyclical *Probe nostis*:

"Finally, how can we speak without praising that famous association which not only in Catholic countries, but also in non-Catholic and unbelieving lands, always obtains new successes and opens to all the faithful of every condition an easy way to become worthy of the apostolic missions and partakers of the spiritual fruits that derive from them? You have already understood that we are talking about the well-known association that bears the name of the Work of the "Propagation of the Faith".<sup>31</sup>

Even Benedict XV, the Pontiff who would approve the beginning of the process of reorganization of the OPF<sup>32</sup>, had had the opportunity to express his benevolence on several occasions and had addressed the Brief *Ad christiani apostolatus* to the Presidents of the two Councils of the OPF in Paris and Lyon, to support the growth of the work and to underline its usefulness for the salvation of millions of souls (1916). The year before the Pontifical Letter under consideration here, when the reorganization project was already being worked on, the Pontiff referred to the OPF (and to the other three works) in the Apostolic Letter *Maximum illud* (1919) with these words:

"Wherefore, We wish to recommend to the generosity of Catholics to favor preferably the works instituted to help the sacred Missions. The first of these is the

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<sup>31</sup> GREGORIO XVI, *Probe nostis* (1840), in *Acta Gregorii Papae XVI scilicet constitutiones, bullae, litterae apostolicae, epistolae*, auspice Vincentio VANNUTELLI recensit et digesta, cura et studio Antonii Mariae BERNASCONI, III, ex Typographia Polyglotta S.C. de Propaganda Fide, Romae 1902, pp. 83-85; also in: Pontificie Opere Missionarie, Direzione Nazionale, *Le Pontificie Opere Missionarie in alcuni interventi e documenti della Santa Sede*, p. 9. 83-85; also in: PONTIFICIE OPERE MISSIONARIE, DIREZIONE NAZIONALE, *Le Pontificie Opere Missionarie in alcuni interventi e documenti della Santa Sede*, p. 9; PONTIFICIE OPERE MISSIONARIE, DIREZIONE NAZIONALE ITALIANA, *Enchiridion della Chiesa missionaria*, EDB, Bologna 1997, p. 109; also in [www.vatican.va/content/gregorius-xvi/it/documents/breve-probe-nostis-18-settembre-1840.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/gregorius-xvi/it/documents/breve-probe-nostis-18-settembre-1840.html)

<sup>32</sup> In this regard, see below what is reported in the handwritten sheet entitled *Propagazione della Fede. Il lato finanziario*: APF, NS, an. 1922, vol. 731, ff. 13r-14r.

so-called "Work of the Propagation of the Faith", often praised by our predecessors, and to which we would like the Congregation of Propaganda to make it with the utmost commitment to yield from now on all the abundant fruit that can be expected from it. For the main source must be very well provided, from which not only the present Missions, but also those yet to be established, must be supplied and provided for. We trust, yes, that the Catholic world will not consent that, while the preachers of error abound in money for their propagandas, the missionaries of truth have to struggle with the lack of everything"<sup>33</sup> .

But, a century after its foundation, or rather the day after the Great War, which had caused serious damage and difficulties to the Catholic missions, - according to the study that was being carried out in Propaganda Fide and which was to be discussed on January 12, 1920 - what was the situation of the Work of the Propagation of the Faith, which Propaganda itself had to take special care of so that it would bear greater fruit?

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<sup>33</sup> The Pontiff also expressed a similar concern for the Work of the Holy *Infancy*, the *Work of St. Peter* and the more recent *Missionary Union of the Clergy*; in fact, he recommended "the *Work of the Holy Infancy*, whose purpose is to provide baptism for the dying children of pagans. Let this work be made all the more congenial inasmuch as our children also have their share in it; whereby, while they learn to appreciate the value of the benefit of the faith, they become accustomed to the practice of cooperating in its diffusion. Nor should we forget the *Work of St. Peter*, which has for its object the good formation of the native clergy of the Missions. Moreover, we also desire that what was prescribed by our predecessor, of happy memory, Leo XIII, be fulfilled, namely, that on the day of the Epiphany of the Lord, in all the Churches of the world, the collection "to redeem slaves in Africa" be made and that the money collected be remitted in its entirety to the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda (November 20, 1890. Cf. *Collectanea* n. 1943). But in order that these desires of ours may be realized with the surest guarantee and flattering success, you must in a special way, Venerable Brethren, organize your clergy for the Missions. In fact, the faithful people have an innate propensity to help apostolic enterprises with largesse; and thus, it must be the work of your diligence to know how to channel this spirit of liberality for the good and prosperity of the Missions. To achieve this, it would be our desire that the "Missionary Union of the Clergy" be established in all the dioceses of the world, subject in everything to the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide, to which, for our part, we have granted as many attributions as are necessary for its perfect functioning. Hardly born in Italy, it has already spread to various other regions, and, object of our pleasure, it flourishes under the protection of not a few pontifical favors. And rightly so: because its character fits perfectly with the influence that the priest must exert, either to awaken among the faithful an interest in the conversion of the Gentiles, or to make them contribute to the missionary works, which bear our approval. " nn.96-106.

[https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xv/es/apost\\_letters/documents/hf\\_ben-xv\\_apl\\_19191130\\_maximum-illud.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xv/es/apost_letters/documents/hf_ben-xv_apl_19191130_maximum-illud.html)

### 3. The *Ponencia* and the deliberations of the Cardinals approved by the Pope.

On January 12, 1920, the Cardinals of Propaganda Fide met in Plenary Session<sup>34</sup> to discuss the project of reorganization of the *Work of the Propagation of the Faith* contained in the Report presented by Cardinal Merry del Val.

In the discussion that took place in the Propaganda Palace in the Spanish Steps in Rome, Cardinals Billot, Cagliero, Camassei, Gasparri, Gasquet, Giorgi, Giustini, Lega, Marini, Vannutelli, Vico were present, together with Cardinal Ponente Merry del Val and Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda Van Rossum, as recorded in the manuscript *Foglio di Udienza* containing the deliberations taken on that occasion and also the approval of Benedict XV granted that same day.

The *presentation of the paper* opened with an indication of the subject and the problems being evaluated:

"With the present Paper we submit to the consideration of Your Eminences a question of grave importance for the increase of the material means necessary for the development of the holy missions.

It is a project to reorganize the Pious Work for the Propagation of the Faith, which currently has its centers in Lyon and Paris, in order to give it the universality and effectiveness necessary to achieve its objective more adequately.

In view of the importance of this matter, it has been deemed appropriate to develop the report in some detail, adding to it the most necessary factual information that may provide certain elements of judgment for the enlightened wisdom of Your Eminences:

1. On the need for more extensive aid for the maintenance and development of the holy missions;
  2. On the obstacles that the current organization of the Work places in the way of the broader contribution of the Catholic world;
- On the plans for the reorganization of the Pious Work for the Propagation of the Faith"<sup>35</sup>.

The question, which was defined as being *of serious importance*, referred to two inseparable aspects, the first linked to the work of the Work and the second to the nature, or identity, of the Work: on the one hand, the *increase of material means for the*

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<sup>34</sup> The Plenary Meeting, or General Congregation, was initially set for December 12, 1919, but was later postponed due to the commitments of some cardinals: cf. APF, *NS*, an. 1922, vol. 731, f. 67r [acta, mns.]. "The *Congregation* proper is the *Congregation of Cardinals*, composed of members of the Sacred College, although the number is not fixed and determined. Of the members, some live in the Curia and belong to other Congregations [...]; the others live outside Rome and participate in the meetings, called *Plenaries*, only when they are in Rome. In spite of their name, the Plenary Meetings rarely gather all the members, but the meeting is valid whatever the number of attendees. The Secretary of Propaganda acts as Secretary. The vote of Their Eminences is deliberative, but is subject to pontifical sanction. Plenary sessions are ordinarily held twice a month, but may be convened more or less frequently, depending on the matters to be discussed. [...] The matters to be discussed in the Plenary are prepared by the Secretariat (with the exception of the Administration) which is responsible for printing a report (*Ponenza*) distributed in advance to the Holy Father and all the Cardinals. One of them is the *rapporteur* (*Ponente*) and receives, in addition to the printed report, the originals of all the documents contained in the Appendix (*Sommario*) of the report and all that is necessary for a full understanding of the matter. The Plenaries are held in the main hall of the former *Propaganda* building (Piazza di Spagna)", STANGHETTI, Giuseppe, *Prassi della S.C. de Propaganda Fide*, Officium Libri Catholici, Romae 1943, pp. 99-100.

<sup>35</sup> APF, *Minutes*, an. 1919, vol. 290, ff. 378r-378v.

*development of the missions, and on the other, the reorganization of the Work in terms of its universality and the objective it pursues.*

After setting out the three parts that make up the *Report*, it is noted that "in addition to the *Summary* which reproduces the negotiations between the Sacred Congregation and the Councils of Lyon and Paris, and illustrates with documents some points of the report, it also includes an Archive Note on the origin, nature and development of the Pious Work of the Propagation of the Faith, drawn up from the documents in our Archives, the main ones of which are listed below"<sup>36</sup>.

The introduction concluded with the mention of an accompanying printed pamphlet by the Director of the Pious Work in the United States of America, Monsignor Joseph Fréri, who had been "invited to present his information and opinion on the progress of the Work to the Sacred Congregation"<sup>37</sup>.

### **3.1 Need for increased support to maintain and develop missions**

The section opened with some considerations on various dimensions and the affirmation of the inadequacy of the means available for world missionary activity:

"The spreading of the faith in the world is a work of grace: the ordinary means ordained by God is apostolic preaching: and this, in the common procedure of providence, needs also material help. [...] The Supreme Pontiffs have principally entrusted to this Sacred Congregation the arduous task of evangelizing infidel peoples; the field open to the work of its missionaries is immense and difficult; but the means at present at the disposal of the Catholic apostolate are totally inadequate for the great work which it has to accomplish"<sup>38</sup>.

Data concerning the missions under the jurisdiction of Propaganda and the personnel dedicated to them (number of missionary dioceses, vicariates and apostolic prefectures, missionaries, missionary religious, catechists, lay brothers, secular teachers), data concerning the sums for the missions collected by the OPF in the last twenty years and various written testimonies of the Heads of Missions who applied for grants (from East Hunan and West Hunan in China; North Cochinchina; Japan; Mongolia; East Tonkin; the Dutch missions, etc.).

It is clear from the picture that "the malaise in all the missions is very serious"<sup>39</sup>; "everywhere there is a lack of evangelical workers, native priests and catechists [and that] the slow progress of Catholicism is largely attributed to the lack of material means"<sup>40</sup>.

To this was added a "brief summary of the religious conditions in the missions in the various parts of the world"<sup>41</sup> which contained not only elements of difficulty but also some considerations with flattering prospects: If Asia was considered "the immense reservoir of humanity [where one finds] the thickest and most numerous human conglomerates, which exceed half of the whole human race, and which, shaking off the

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<sup>36</sup> APF, *Minutes*, an. 1919, vol. 290, f. 378v.

<sup>37</sup> APF, *Acta*, an. 1919, vol. 290, f. 378v. On f. 400r it reads that "Fréri's pamphlet is attached to the present Ponzenza," but there is no trace of it in the Ponzenza; the pamphlet is instead preserved in APF, *NS*, an. 1922, vol. 731, ff. 392r-405v.

<sup>38</sup> APF, *Minutes*, an. 1919, vol. 290, f. 378v.

<sup>39</sup> APF, *Minutes*, an. 1919, vol. 290, f. 379r.

<sup>40</sup> APF, *Minutes*, an. 1919, vol. 290, f. 382r.

<sup>41</sup> APF, *Minutes*, an. 1919, vol. 290, f. 383r.

millennial lethargy, are beginning to take an active part in the moral life of the world [and] India, China, Japan are on the march"<sup>42</sup> , In Africa there was now "an extended network of missions with closely woven networks, which we hope will be strengthened more and more for the mystical fishing of the Gospel"<sup>43</sup> .

The Catholic missionary panorama was also aggravated by the expansion of Protestantism, which on the one hand took advantage of the difficulties and shortcomings of the former, but on the other had enormous resources at its disposal. Among the various testimonies collected in this regard, that of the apostolic vicar of Hunan (China), Msgr. Menicatti, which appeared in *L'Osservatore Romano* a few months earlier, contained an exemplary passage worthy of note: "We [missionaries] the poor Roman Catholics, are in villages among poor people who need us, or in small rural schools or orphanages supported by the charity of the faithful of Europe, which is very limited. Lately it has been calculated that the Protestant missions in China have at least a hundred times more money than the Catholic ones, that is, if the fifty missions in China spend two million a year, the Protestants spend two hundred million. (*Osservatore Romano*, October 23, 1919)"<sup>44</sup> .

According to the report, the immense, arduous and promising missionary work underway was compounded by the lack of *financial means* in the Catholic world.

### **3.2 Means and obstacles to obtain a greater contribution from the Catholic world**

In addition to the contribution for the missions offered by the people, recalled with gratitude in the letters and reports of the missionaries, it was noted that the "principal means that the Church has at present to finance the holy missions is the Work for the Propagation of the Faith in Lyon and Paris erected in 1822"<sup>45</sup> .

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<sup>42</sup> APF, *Minutes*, an. 1919, vol. 290, f. 383v.

<sup>43</sup> APF, *Minutes*, an. 1919, vol. 290, f. 385v.

<sup>44</sup> APF, *Minutes*, an. 1919, vol. 290, f. 392r.

<sup>45</sup> APF, *Minutes*, an. 1919, vol. 290, f. 393v.

The OPF was born after the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Empire<sup>46</sup>, when a religious revival took place and a new<sup>47</sup> missionary season was inaugurated, and it was customary to cite this Work in connection with the French cities of Lyon and Paris because of the location of the two central councils of the OPF, the first born in Jaricot's home city and the second erected in the headquarters city of the *Paris Foreign Missions* (MEP) and capital of France. If during the first decades of the 19th century "France was at the head of the Catholic movement and of the apostolate movement in favor of the infidel nations"<sup>48</sup> it was noted that "now [1920] times have fundamentally changed. The conditions in which we live are no longer those of the past. The various nations, too, have resolutely embarked on the path of evangelization and Catholic propaganda"<sup>49</sup>.

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<sup>46</sup> Here is the historical framework written by ZAMPETTI, Giovanni, *Le Pontificie Opere Missionarie*, in METZLER, Josef (ed.), *Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide memoria rerum...*, pp. 414-415. pp. 414-415: "At the beginning of the 19th century the Catholic Missions were in a miserable condition. The eighteenth-century wave of skepticism had diminished religious sentiment in many European nations. The suppression of the Society of Jesus (1773) had deprived the Church of excellent educators and generous missionaries. The French Revolution (1789) had stripped the Church, closed the monasteries and seminaries - including the Seminary of the M.E.P. - confiscated its goods, decimated the clergy, and dispersed the religious, thus impoverishing the Missions of personnel and means. The Sacred Congregation "de Propaganda Fide" was also suppressed in 1799. The aids granted to the Missions in the previous centuries: contributions of princes, foundations, patrimony of the various institutions, etc. had come to an end. The coffers of the reconstituted Sacred Congregation "de Propaganda Fide" were also empty. On the other hand, the idea of the cooperation of the faithful for the propagation of the Faith had not yet taken hold. Attempts at organization had been made in previous centuries, but without positive results and not on a large scale. To solve the crisis of personnel and means of action, it was necessary for the Church to regain awareness of the universality of its mandate and to realize - once the temptation to resort to ambiguous political protection had been removed - that the great strength for carrying out missionary work lay in the divine promises and in the inherent potential of the Christian people. The few representatives of the missionaries who had returned to Europe and the letters that arrived from the Missions contributed to awakening the universal evangelizing conscience of the Church. To the voice of these responded not a few exponents of the Catholic "resistance" who now also engaged in missionary cooperation and direct activity. Only with the pontificate of Gregory XVI (1831-1846) can it be said that this great crisis was overcome. The perfect efficacy of the reborn Congregation of Propaganda, the growing number of missionaries, the heartfelt collaboration of the Christian people began to bear fruit beyond the most optimistic forecasts. In the meantime, in fact, many works of missionary cooperation had sprung up everywhere; but three of them then asserted themselves by their universality, catholicity and simplicity of execution. These were born in France: the Work for the Propagation of the Faith, the Work of the Holy Childhood and the Work of St. Peter the Apostle. In the following century, a fourth was added: the Missionary Union of the Clergy. Today all of them have the rank of "pontifical" and have a privileged task in the missionary animation of the Christian people".

<sup>47</sup> For an overview of the missions at the time of the Restoration see: CHIOCCHETTA, Pietro, *Le vicende del secolo XIX nella prospettiva missionaria*, in METZLER, Josef (ed.), *Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide memoria rerum: 350 anni a servizio delle Missioni: 1622-1972*, III/1 (1815-1972), Herder, Rom-Freiburg-Wien, 1975, pp. 3-29; ROGIER, Ludovicus Jacobus et Alii, *Nuova storia della Chiesa. Secolo dei lumi, rivoluzioni, restaurazioni (1715-1848)*, Marietti, Genova-Milano 1989 rist. (1976<sup>2</sup>); LEFLON, Jean, *Storia della Chiesa. Restaurazione e crisi liberale (1815-1846)*, XX/2, Editrice SAIE, Torino 1984 (rist. ed. 1977<sup>2</sup>); JEDIN, Hubert (ed.), *Storia della Chiesa. Tra Rivoluzione e Restaurazione*, VIII/1, Jaca Book, Milano 1993<sup>2</sup>; PLONGERON, Bernard (ed.), *Storia del cristianesimo. Le sfide della modernità (1750-1840)*, X, Borla-Città Nuova, Roma 2004.

<sup>48</sup> APF, *Minutes*, an. 1919, vol. 290, f. 393v.

<sup>49</sup> APF, *Minutes*, an. 1919, vol. 290, f. 394r. It is worth recalling the difficulties that the outbreak and consequences of the Great War posed for the Catholic missions. "The tremendous cataclysm that for many years swept over the so-called civilized world, not only had the effect of turning Europe into an immense cemetery; but it also meant a tragic and desolate time for the apostolic ministry in distant lands, where the servants of the Gospel were engaged in the holiest of tasks: that of the propagation of the faith. [...] And the war brought us another terrifying phenomenon: a phenomenon that will make the work of the

This was followed, on the one hand, by a broad presentation of how the missionary movement of the 19th century, coming from France, had spread to various European and American nations (with different objectives: the baptized non-Catholics *ad intra* and the evangelization of the non-baptized *ad extra* of the same nations) and, on the other hand, the presentation of a problem generated by the nationalism of the time that ended up hindering the development of the OPF in the various nations with negative consequences in fundraising:

"From this fact [the spread of interest in the missions] it results, however, that the Catholics of the various nations, favoring their own missions, do not submit to a work which seems to them to be of a foreign national character. And such in their eyes is the Œuvre de la *Propagation de la Foi de Paris et de Lyon*. In Paris and Lyon, they see two cities of a rival nation, and not the natural center of an international and Catholic work which concerns equally the missions of all peoples. This spirit of rivalry was painfully exacerbated by the past war and the artificial peace that followed.

Another fact that may have fueled the growing aversion and distrust of other Catholic nations against France in recent times seems to have been the installation in power of a fundamentally anti-church radical-Masonic government.

In any case, it is undeniable that in the various nations there is a great and growing aversion to send to France the money collected for the Work of the Propagation of the Faith; and that it is partly due to this fact that the work does not reach the desired development in other nations"<sup>50</sup>.

In relation to this, the situations and data of Spain and Italy as Catholic nations were reported, with the addition of the United States of America. As for the United States of America, the report indicated the causes that, according to the writings of Monsignor Fréri, hindered the reception, diffusion, and action of the OPF in that country:

- "(a) this [the OPF] is administered exclusively by lay people;
- (b) their appeals to charity are not sufficiently resolute;

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Missionary a hundred times more difficult, even when peace is restored in the world. We would like to mention that in the present conflict the heathen world in all parts of the world was, we believe for the first time, called upon to fight against Christians fighting among themselves. Those to whom Europe had preached for centuries the law of charity, peace, forgiveness, fraternity, came to assist, to take part in the conflict initiated and contested by baptized peoples.": *L'apostolato e la guerra*, in *Il Massaja* an. VI, n. 6 (1919), pp. 81 and 83. Sul contesto missionario cattolico dei primi decenni del secolo XX: BRULS, Jean *Dalle missioni alle giovani Chiese*, in AUBERT, Roger et Alii, *Nuova storia della Chiesa. 5/II La Chiesa nel mondo moderno (1878-1914)*, Marietti, Genova-Milano 2002 (rist. ed. 1979), pp. 237-299; BAUMGARTNER, Jakob, *L'espansione delle missioni cattoliche da Leone XIII alla fine della seconda Guerra mondiale*, in JEDIN, Hubert (ed.), *Storia della Chiesa. La Chiesa negli Stati moderni e i movimenti sociali (1878-1914)*, IX, Jaca Book, Milano 1993<sup>2</sup>, pp. 667-672; LA BELLA, Gianni (ed.), *Pio X e il suo tempo*, Il Mulino, Bologna 2003; PRUDHOMME, Claude, *Benoît XV et la question des missions. Une nouvelle approche de la stratégie missionnaire*, in AGOSTINO, Marc (ed.), *Santa Sede e cattolici nel mondo postbellico. 1918-1922*, Pontificio Comitato di Scienze Storiche-LEV, Città del Vaticano 2020, pp. 173-203.

<sup>50</sup> APF, *Acta*, an. 1919, vol. 290, f. 397v. On "nationalism", see: D'ANCONA, Umberto, *Nazionalismo*, in *Enciclopedia Italiana*, XXIV Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, Roma 1934, pp. 464-465, [www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/nazionalismo\\_%28Enciclopedia-Italiana%29/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/nazionalismo_%28Enciclopedia-Italiana%29/); MESSINEO, Antonio, *Nazionalismo*, in *Enciclopedia Cattolica*, VIII, Ente per l'Enciclopedia Cattolica e per il Libro Cattolico, Roma 1952, coll. 1705-1706; DORE, GIAMPIETRO, *Nazionalismo*, in CHIOCCHETTA, Pietro (ed.), *Dizionario Storico Religioso*, Editrice Studium, Roma 1966, pp. 631-633.



- (c) is under exclusive French control;
- d) their assignments (distributions) are made without sufficient knowledge of the status of the missions;
- e) the manner of distributing special gifts and Mass alms has given rise to complaints from benefactors and missionaries"<sup>51</sup>.

Also from the United States, it was commented that the OPF would be more developed and subsidized if it

- 1) its center would have been moved from Lyon-Paris to Rome;
- 2) the direction of the OPF would have been assumed by Propaganda as "center, head, common mother of all missions"<sup>52</sup>.

In addition to the analysis made so far, there was another problem, which was also an expression of the nationalisms of the time, and which arose several times and in different ways during the century of life of the OPF, namely, the attempts at autonomy made in some European nations. In fact, several attempts had been made "to constitute the Councils of the Work established in those nations into autonomous organizations, and to found associations of a general nature to rival the French one"<sup>53</sup>; these attempts were followed by the creation of Institutes of a national and particular nature, both in Europe and in America. The colonial interests of the European States were not exempt from these maneuvers, which were systematically opposed by Propaganda, as is recorded in the *Archive Note of the Conference*; the OPF that had crossed French borders and established itself in formally Catholic countries was not always seen....

"by the civil governments and with an outlook free of political concerns and national jealousies. This fact caused that, from the beginning, several Central Councils tried to become independent from the center of origin of the work, to administer the funds they collected according to the interests of their missions, without sending them to France, for fear that they would become an instrument of commercial competition and colonial expansion for the benefit simply of that nation. Such hesitation [...] endangered, from the beginning, the unity and catholicity of the work, prevented further development, and obliged the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda to intervene often with all its authority, so that the work might retain the principal character which had distinguished it from the beginning"<sup>54</sup>.

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<sup>51</sup> APF, *Acta*, an. 1919, vol. 290, f. 400r. L'opuscolo in APF, *NS*, an 1922, vol. 731, ff. 392r-405v, con titolo Joseph FRÉRI Missionnaire Apostolique, *Une Oeuvre a reformer. "La Propagation de la Foi"*, Imprime pour circulation privée, s.d., New York, [pp. 28]; ad esso si opponeva, riportato ai ff. 408r-415v, un altro opuscolo a cura dei Presidenti dell'OPF di Parigi e Lione, rispettivamente V. Am. C. de la Jaille and H. Saint Olive, entitled LA PROPAGATION DE LA FOI, *Réponse a la brochure: Une Oeuvre a reformer* [pp. 18]. These publications highlight the tension between Fréri's "peripheral-American" vision and the "central-French" vision of the presidents of the OPF Center.

<sup>52</sup> APF, *Minutes*, an. 1919, vol. 290, f. 400v.

<sup>53</sup> APF, *Minutes*, an. 1919, vol. 290, f. 400v.

<sup>54</sup> APF, *Acta*, an. 1919, vol. 290, ff. 446r-446v. It was also noted that the "first Council of the Work that departed in some way from the dependence of the Center in which the Work was born, was the Council of Paris, to which with the Consensus of Lyon a large part of the management and administration of the entire Work was reserved": f. 446v. After Paris, Switzerland, the Kingdom of Naples, Bavaria, Belgium, Holland, England, Spain and Austria. In some cases, attempts were made to create *Societies* similar to the OPF to collect offerings for the missions of the compatriots.

In 1920, it became clear to Propaganda that the growth of national antagonisms meant that "the two qualities [*unity* and *universality*] that distinguish the pious work from all others are again under attack from all sides"<sup>55</sup> ; entrusted to the care of the Congregation, these *qualities* of the OPF aroused the attention and concern of Propaganda because on them depended not only the life and development of the Work, but also the fruits of the activity it carried out for the missions.

The Paper associates two other reasons for the reorganization of the OPF with the "nationalist" problem noted above: the fact that the money sent to Lyon and Paris was administered and distributed by lay people, and the significant costs involved<sup>56</sup> in changing currency when transferring to other nations.

After the presentation of the situation, the critical points, and the vision from the "American periphery", the project elaborated in Propaganda and the observations made by the Central Councils of the Lyon-Paris OPF were presented.

### 3.3 Project for the reorganization of the Work for the Propagation of the Faith

If it is clear from what was said that "the painful lack of means provided for the great work of evangelization of the still largely pagan world, as well as [...] the most notable obstacles to a more generous contribution from the Catholic world"<sup>57</sup> , he was also careful to clarify that Propaganda did not intend to suppress, distort or essentially change the *Work of Paris-Lyon*, nor did it intend to do anything that could harm France; the only objective pursued was to support the innumerable needs of the missions, the sole purpose of the *Work* born in France.

In view of the documented need, "long and mature reflection was given to the best way to organize and develop this great work"<sup>58</sup> , and the *paper* goes on to present the organizational proposal and respond to the legitimate observations and objections formulated by the Paris and Lyon Councils of the OPF.

The reorganization project covered three points:

1) The *center of the OPF* was to be transferred to Rome and the direction was to pass from the *laity* to the Congregation of Propaganda Fide, so that the OPF would no longer be "French" and would become "an international and truly Catholic work"<sup>59</sup> . This measure was to resolve most of the drawbacks and obstacles outlined above. Several reasons were put forward to support the move:

a) the OPF "is, by its nature, an eminently Catholic and international work. Its natural center is the center of Catholicism, Rome, and in the case of missions, the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda. [...] the center itself, Rome and Propaganda would become an attraction and a stimulus for the Work;"<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> APF, *Minutes*, an. 1919, vol. 290, f. 449r.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. APF, *Minutes*, an. 1919, vol. 290, f. 404r.

<sup>57</sup> APF, *Minutes*, an. 1919, vol. 290, f. 400v.

<sup>58</sup> APF, *Minutes*, an. 1919, vol. 290, f. 400v.

<sup>59</sup> APF, *Minutes*, an. 1919, vol. 290, f. 405r.

<sup>60</sup> APF, *Minutes*, an. 1919, vol. 290, f. 405r.

b) only Propaganda had all the data to support the different missions according to their needs and merits: "Propaganda knows perfectly well from the annual and quinquennial reports [...] the state of the missions, their needs, their income, their special merits, their development"<sup>61</sup>;

c) it was humiliating for Propaganda to carry out missions without having the material means to advance them.<sup>62</sup>

2) The subsidies and money collected in the various countries were to be deposited in the respective countries and a special committee would administer them, reporting to Propaganda at least once a year; thus, avoiding loss of money due to currency exchanges and encouraging fundraising for the missions in OPF.

3) Propaganda was to dispose of the money and subsidies collected in the various countries and distribute them equitably, with the help of an international committee.

At the same time, a work was to promote the introduction and spread of the OPF in all nations: a work based on the organization of the Catholic clergy for the missions, where all priests would contribute "to the great undertaking of the conversion of the world [...] one of their most serious duties"<sup>63</sup>. In this regard, the *Report mentioned the birth of what would later become the fourth of the PP.OO.MM* (which Benedict XV had mentioned in the *Maximum illud* a little more than a month before the Meeting under consideration here):

"Not long ago there arose in Milan a pious union that has precisely this objective [the spread of the OPF]. It is called "*Missionary Union of the Clergy*." This union has been approved by the Holy Father, enriched with many special favors and privileges. The statutes are such that this Union can be erected anywhere. Moreover, if any article is not adapted to the genius of any nation or is not indicated for any reason, the Holy Father has given the Prefect of Propaganda all faculties to adapt the statutes according to the needs of the different countries without prejudice to the favors and spiritual graces.

This Union has already been introduced in some countries with the happiest consequences for the holy missions. Work is being done for its propagation and everywhere it is welcomed with great enthusiasm. If, together with the propagation of this organization of the clergy, the serious inconveniences and obstacles arising from the Statute of the Paris-Lyon Work are removed, it is not to be doubted that the abundant means desired for the missions will soon be available."<sup>64</sup>.

The architect of the planned reorganization project was the Prefect of Propaganda, Cardinal Van Rossum. In this regard, the first information we have is contained in a handwritten sheet of Van Rossum himself dated 16 January 1919 in Rome and preserved in vol. 731 of the *New Series of the APF*. Written ten months after his appointment as Prefect of Propaganda, Van Rossum had also noted the approval he had received from Benedict XV.

Not reproduced in the Report, it is transcribed below in the part that is of interest here:

"[f. 13r] [title] Propagation of the faith. The financial part

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<sup>61</sup> APF, *Minutes*, an. 1919, vol. 290, f. 405r.

<sup>62</sup> APF, *Minutes*, an. 1919, vol. 290, ff. 405r-405v.

<sup>63</sup> APF, *Minutes*, an. 1919, vol. 290, f. 405v.

<sup>64</sup> APF, *Minutes*, an. 1919, vol. 290, f. 406r.

It is a fact that the Catholic world could and would, in fact, give much greater financial support to the missions if it were better organized.

[...]

Huge sums are collected for the missions even in recent times and no account is given of how [f. 13v] they are distributed or used for the missions.

The waste of resources and the abuses to which this approach can give rise are evident.

Action is urgently needed both to assist missions and to prevent or eliminate abuses. This could be done:

Write to the Direction of the Prop. de la Foi in Paris and expose the serious inconveniences that exist there and the very serious harm that is being done to the propagation of the faith by the loss of so many means, and ask them how it could be remedied.

Afterwards, another organization will have to be approached.

The center should be Rome in Propaganda

In the different countries there should be a central directorate to which the diocesan directorates report.

The amounts collected remain in the various countries.

They give Propaganda an accurate account.

Propaganda makes the distributions and then writes to each of the central directorates to which mission and how much they should send.

Communicated to the Holy Father at the audience of January 16, 1919 S. His Holiness highly appreciated the proposal and fully approved both the way of proceeding and the projected plan of organization.

Jan. 16. 1919

G.M. Card. van Rossum".<sup>65</sup>

The project set out in three points of the *Report* discussed on January 12, 1920, thus reflected what Van Rossum had indicated a year earlier, motivated by concern for the Missions that depended materially on the money collected by the OPF. From the beginning there was the transfer of the headquarters of the OPF to Rome, to Propaganda Fide, with a view to centralization.

Van Rossum's project, begun in January 1919, was not well received by the Lyon-Paris Councils. The Congregation had taken steps to expose the state of affairs and in France "immediately alarmed and having heard of the plans that were being considered, they sought evasions"<sup>66</sup>. In May 1919 a commission of the two Councils was received by the Prefect of Propaganda and then by the Pope, who gave them time to prepare a memorial explaining their reasons. Presented to the Pontiff on August 12, 1919, the *Mémoire des Conseils Centraux de Lyon et de Paris à Sa Sainteté le Pape Benoît XV* was then delivered by the Pope to the Secretary of Propaganda Monsignor Camillo Laurenti<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> APF, *NS*, an. 1922, vol. 731, ff. 13r-14r [or., mns.]. On f. 13r the brief account of the OPF situation in some countries is omitted, as it was already reported in the *Report of the Ponencia*; on f. 14r Van Rossum pointed out how to proceed progressively and start by reporting to the Council of Paris and Lyon, etc., as already explained.

<sup>66</sup> APF, *Minutes*, an. 1919, vol. 290, f. 406r.

<sup>67</sup> Camillo Laurenti, 1861-1938. Secretary of the Congregation of Propaganda Fide from August 12, 1911 to June 13, 1921. Cf. *Hierarchia Catholica medii et recentioris aevi*, VIII, pp. 19 and 26; KOWALSKY, *Serie dei Cardinali Prefetti e dei Segretari della Sacra Congregazione "de Propaganda Fide"*, Editiones Urbanianae, Romae 1962, pp. 28-29.

at the Audience of August 29, 1919<sup>68</sup> ; the text consisted, according to the Pontiff, of a premise (in the *Report* defined as *prejudicial*) and some points:

*Prejudice*: premise "against any innovation considering the approvals and benevolence of the Supreme Pontiffs towards the Work; the happy results obtained; the equanimity and impartiality observed in the distribution of subsidies"; <sup>69</sup>

Points (answered in the *Report*):

- 1) difficulties in France, both on the part of Catholics and anticlericals;
- 2) the expected change faced the unknown;
- 3) the difficulties in continuing the publication of the *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*;
- 4) the reduced control of Propaganda Fide over all the missions, since there were some that depended on the Congregation for the Oriental Churches and the Consistory.

The responses to the observations of the French *Memorial* were also included in the conclusion of the *Report* which, structured in four points and with more far-reaching motivations compared to the first formulation of the project, had its epilogue in the usual formulation of the *Doubt*.

"[f. 410r] In conclusion, the following points seem to be established by the above:

- 1- The current aid is not sufficient to maintain and develop the Missions, while the Catholic world could and should provide it more generously.
- 2- Looking for the causes of this painful deficiency, it seems that the lack of organization [f. 410v] in the main Work destined to collect them, that is, the *Obra Pia de la Propagación de la Fe*, is not the least.
- 3- Its unity, universality and effectiveness are undermined: a) by having its center in France, in the cities of Lyon and Paris, towards which the regrettable but unfortunately existing national susceptibilities of other countries are not directed with pleasure; b) by the fact that its councils are made up almost exclusively of lay people; c) by the fact that they are all French rather than an international council.
- 4- Therefore, in order to strengthen the necessary unity, universality and efficacy of the work, in order to assure the necessary help to the holy missions, it seems opportune: (a) to transfer the center to Rome, to the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda, the direct organ of the Holy Father for the holy missions; (b) to constitute, under the direction of the same Sacred Congregation, an international council of suitable ecclesiastics for the timely distribution of subsidies; (c) to simplify the method of distribution, and better stimulate the development of the Work by using suitable means of Propaganda.

This seems to be the main idea of the project of reorganization of the Opera. Moreover, in view of the opposition of the French Councils and in order not to hurt their sensibilities, it could also be left to France to continue to administer and distribute for a few years as in the past, giving an account to the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda. The other countries would not be obliged to send their offers to France or to depend on Paris-Lyon, but would be free to make use of the new Statute described above.

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<sup>68</sup> APF, *NS*, an. 1922, vol. 731, ff. 48r-56v. The notice of the delivery is handwritten on the title page of the *Memoriale* entitled *Œuvre DE LA PROPAGATION DE LA FOI, Mémoire des Conseils Centraux de Lyon et de Paris a Sa Sainteté le Pape Benoit XV* [pp. 16].

<sup>69</sup> APF, *Minutes*, an. 1919, vol. 290, f. 406v.

May the Lord cause his Creator Spirit to blow upon the arid fields of infidelity, and awaken in Catholic peoples a new zeal for the apostolate and a new impulse of charity. "70 .

If the words *unity*, *universality* (*catholicity*) and *efficiency* appeared as the fundamental reasons for the project, its realization envisaged centralization and clericalization: the transfer of the Central See to Rome; an administrative center composed of ecclesiastics of international origin; the rationalization of the distribution of "means" to the missions; the extension of the previous system for the French Councils and the freedom of choice for those of other countries; the mention of a new Statute.

The *report* concludes with the customary formulation of the

[f. 410v] *Doubt*:

*Whether and how the project presented for the reorganization of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith should be carried out.*

The *Doubt* was answered by the deliberations of the Cardinals present at that Plenary Meeting and noted on the *Audience Sheet* which, handwritten and inserted and signed in the Ponencia, also reported the approval that Benedict XV had granted that same day:

" [f. 411r] Pon. N. 20- Prot. 3268/19

In Congregatione Generali de Propaganda Fide, habita die 12 Ianuarii 1920, cui interfuerunt E.mi ac R.mi Patres Cardinales:

Vannutelli, Vico, Merry del Val, Gasparri, van Rossum Praef., Cagliero, Camassei, Billot, Giustini, Lega, Gasquet, Marini, Giorgi.

Report with summary and file note.

On a project for the reorganization of the Work for the Propagation of the Faith.

Referente E.mo Merry del Val, E.mi Patres respondendum censuerunt:

Negative, at least for the time being, with regard to the relocation of the center of the Work; affirmative with regard to some changes to be introduced in the organization of the Work. The following directives are mainly proposed:

1. To demand that an ecclesiastic, a prelate or even a bishop, preferably already a missionary, appointed by the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda, be at the head of the Work, so as to better link Paris to Lyon under one head, leaving the center of [f. 411v] Paris to become a simple branch of the center of Lyon.
2. To prescribe that all alms from Masses be kept at the disposal of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda through some local ecclesiastical authority, which would receive appropriate faculties and directions for their distribution.
3. To hold once a year, in the Palace of Propaganda, under the direction of the Cardinal Prefect, a Congress of two or three days' duration, in which the representatives of the Work in the different regions of the world would be convoked. At such a Congress a full report on the state of the missions could be presented by the Secretary of Propaganda, so that all could take a greater interest, without national prejudice, in order to better arrange the distribution of assignments, and to obtain harmony among them *and to agree on all other measures deemed opportune for the progress and development of the Work* [in italics what has been specified, being written in a space beside].

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<sup>70</sup> APF, *Minutes*, an. 1919, vol. 290, ff. 410r-410v.

To leave to the faithful of the various countries the freedom to adhere to the Work of Paris-Lyon, or to contribute directly to the Holy See, with the understanding that this can also be done through special organizations.

*It seems to me that with regard to the scope of this mind the definitive opinion of the Most Eminent Fathers was not well specified, and that different interpretations of the so-called "Freedom of the Faithful" were expressed. With this reservation* [italicized as specified by Card. Merry del Val; underlined in the text].

*Ita est*

[signed] R. Card. Merry del Val

[f. 412r] Ex Audientia SS.mi eiusdem diei

Sanctissimus Dominus Noster Benedictus PP. XV, adprobare dignatus est supradictas resolutiones.

[signed] C. Laurenti Segr.<sup>71</sup>

In the light of the first "draft" of the reorganization project noted by Van Rossum on January 16, 1919, of the approval given by Benedict XV on the same day and of the subsequent transfer of the seat of the OPF to Rome in Propaganda Fide established three years later by his successor Pius XI with the Motu proprio *Romanorum Pontificum* of May 3, 1922<sup>72</sup>, what was decided on January 12, 1920 appears, on the one hand, as the conclusion of the first of two phases of an ongoing process and, on the other, as a temporary compromise between different visions and sensibilities among the cardinals of Propaganda.

The deliberations were based on solid documentation on the situation of the OPF and the different continental contexts, the evolution of supply and the needs of the missions; At the same time, while on the one hand, the aim was to respect the centuries-old history of a well-established ecclesiastical reality and the different Catholic realities linked to it, maintaining a prudent position, partially recognizing their requests and emphasizing their particular (national) needs, on the other hand, measures were introduced to correct certain aspects, the freedom of the faithful in the exercise of their donations was affirmed<sup>73</sup> and

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<sup>71</sup> APF, *Acta*, an. 1919, vol. 290, ff. 411r-412r [or., mns.]. Another identical signed manuscript copy is in APF, *NS*, an. 1922, vol. 731, ff. 367r-368r. In the APF, on p. 377 of vol. II of the *Index to the Acts*, the decision was summarized as follows: "Work of the Propagation of the Faith. Project of reorganization = The Pontiff gives norms for the better functioning of the Work and for a more equitable distribution of the allocations = Pon. 12/I/1920 = (ff. 378-521)".

<sup>72</sup> Cf. PIUS XI, Motu proprio *Romanorum Pontificum* "De Opere a Propagatione Fidei amplificando", cf. *supra*, note 8. In this Motu Proprio, Pius XI established that the *Work of the Propagation of the Faith*, reconstituted under a new form, would have its headquarters in Rome, in the Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith, and no longer in Lyons. Here are two significant passages from the text that reflect the pontificate's approach: The Pontiff stated that "with regard to the subsidy of material means, which, although they are not the most important thing for the good of the Catholic Missions, are nevertheless of great importance" and proposed "to provide decisively for all Catholic Missions with the offerings of the whole Catholic world; so that all the collections of money, even the smallest, collected from all nations and from all the children of the Church for the Missions in general, be united as in a single center." And all this money entrusted exclusively to the power and free disposal of ourselves and of the S. Motu proprio *Romanorum Pontificum*, in PONTIFICIA OPERA DELLA PROPAGAZIONE DELLA FIDE, *La propagazione della fede nel mondo*, pp. 89 and 90.

<sup>73</sup> In this regard, from the notes sent by Cardinal Pietro Gasparri to the Secretary of Propaganda after the Plenary Meeting, it seems to be clear that the Secretary of State would refer to the principle of freedom of the faithful and that the topic was a matter of discussion: cf. APF, *NS*, an. 1922, vol. 731, ff. 363r-366v [or., mns.] Pietro Gasparri, 1852-1934. Secretary of State from October 13, 1914 to February 7, 1930. Cf.

the project of Roman centralization or French decentralization was not definitively renounced,<sup>74</sup> in the conviction that it was the condition of possibility to guarantee the unity of the Work of the Propagation of the Faith and the fulfillment of its universal (Catholic) missionary purpose.

#### 4. The Visions of Cardinals Van Rossum and Merry del Val

But what were the visions that led to the compromise inherent in these deliberations? Why was the idea of transferring the headquarters of the OPF to Rome, as Van Rossum had envisioned, not accepted? If the concern was shared, it was thought that in order to re-establish "the necessary unity, universality and efficacy of the work, in order to assure the indispensable assistance to the holy missions, it seems opportune: a) to transfer the center to Rome to the Holy Congregation of Propaganda, the direct organ of the Holy Father for the holy missions. "

The documentation allows us to identify the vision of the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda, Van Rossum, and that of the Cardinal Rapporteur, Merry del Val, Secretary of State of the previous Pontiff Pius X.

With regard to Cardinal Van Rossum, it is worth adding to what has already been said, the content of a document that illustrates the thought and the discourse expressed publicly by the Prefect of Propaganda. It is the *Brief Summary of the Congress of May 29, 1919*<sup>75</sup>, that is, the summary of the meeting that took place on that date in Propaganda between Van Rossum and the members of the Councils of the OPF of Lyon-Paris; in the *Brief Summary of the meeting* the reasons of the interlocutors, the requests for explanation of the Representatives of the OPF of Lyon-Paris, the position of the Prefect of Propaganda emerge.

"[f. 44r] [letterhead] S. Congregation of Propaganda Fide.

Brief summary of the Congress held on May 29, 1919, by the Eminent Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda with nine members of the Council of the Work of the Propagation of the Faith in Paris and Lyon.

The President General of the Work introduced the speech by explaining that from the correspondence he had had with Propaganda, he thought he understood that the Cardinal Prefect wanted the center of the Work to be transferred to Rome. The Prefect having replied in the affirmative, he asked to know the reasons for this.

The Cardinal Prefect, after paying tribute to the zeal and impartiality of the Council of the Work, briefly expressed the great needs of the Missions, and pointed out that the contribution which the Catholic world makes is inadequate to these needs, and far below what Catholics could and should do, especially when compared with the enormous sums collected by Protestants. When he studied the reason for this

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*Hierarchia Catholica medii et recentioris aevi*, IX, pp. 9 and 21-23; FANTAPPIÈ, Carlo - ASTORRI, Romeo, Gasparri, Pietro, in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, 52, Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, Roma 1999, pp. 500-507.

<sup>74</sup> In another note on the same sheets of paper that Cardinal Pietro Gasparri sent to Propaganda on January 14, 1920, we read that "The Holy See approves in essence his project of partial decentralization and wishes to discuss some modifications": APF, NS, an. 1922, vol. 731, f. 366.

<sup>75</sup> APF, NS, an. 1922, vol. 731, ff. 44r-45v [o, datt.]. Printed in the *Abstract* in Num. V. Summary of the Congress held by the representatives of the Lyon and Paris Work with the Most Eminent Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda on May 29, 1919: APF, *Acta*, an. 1919, vol. 290, ff. 417r -418r.



deficiency, he could not attribute it to a lack of zeal, self-denial, and activity on the part of the Councils; on the contrary, he believed that it must be attributed to the organization of the Work as it was constituted. It must be recognized that, especially after the war, the nationalistic spirit has been exacerbated everywhere, and Catholics of various nations do not like to contribute to a work that has its center in a foreign country. He illustrated this with several examples, setting forth the works and conditions [f. 44v] of Germany, Spain, Holland, and the United States.

It is therefore advisable to nationalize the Work in the various countries, in the sense that each has its own national center, but all are subordinate to the higher center in Rome, where the supreme authority and the center of the Catholic Church is. This direction from Rome would remove the obstacle that now stands in the way of the further development of the Work. The reason, therefore, for the planned change is to save the Work with its universal character.

The President, thanking the kind words of the Cardinal for the Councils of the Work, expressed the kindness of Catholic France towards the Work, which was born in France, developed in France and collects in France about two thirds of the total contribution. He mentioned the pain it would cause the French to lose the center of the Work; they would not understand the reasons; the Work, now so popular, would lose a considerable part of the contribution it receives, and perhaps this decrease would not be compensated by the increases in other countries.

He also mentioned that a press campaign would be unleashed to attack the Pope, and the anticlerical themselves would become, for political reasons, protectors of the Work. He asked that the Work be allowed to live as it is.

The Cardinal Prefect replied that, if he was referring to the upcoming elections, the measure could be postponed. However, it would be possible to make the population understand the real reason for the change, and then these press campaigns could be effectively countered and should not prevent the realization of useful and necessary projects.

[f. 45r] Therefore, he has good hopes for the success of the project.

He insisted on the excessive development of particular works to the detriment of the main work for the reasons of nationalism mentioned above, until the center is in Rome.

He mentioned in detail some of the needs of the Missions that cannot be satisfied with the present meager means, such as that of the higher schools in China, where the Protestants have 17 universities and the Catholics not even one. He concluded by saying that neither France nor other nations should send the money materially to Rome; and that, although they will keep the money, it will be Rome that will indicate its distribution, since it is there where the needs of the Missions are best known. It was added that France could count on the distribution of its contribution in favor of its own Missions.

This was in response to the objection of the President who observed that the reports or reports that the missionary Bishops currently send to the Work of Paris and Lyon to be printed in the annals or to excite the zeal of the faithful, will cease.

Nothing would change; the Paris and Lyon centers would remain with their administration and correspondence.

Some of those present added minor and detailed observations.

One of the members suggested that the Work be allowed to try to develop further while retaining the present organization, and proposed a Letter from the Holy Father to the Catholic world to stimulate zeal.

The Cardinal Prefect noted that an act of the Holy Father is an excellent proposal, but that this act will be more successful if the aforementioned obstacle of having to contribute to a foreign center is removed.

[f. 45v] A clergyman, who was present and was a member of the Council, acknowledged the greatness of the project and its conformity with the principles; but expressed his doubts as to whether it would be equaled in practice by the Catholics of other nations.

The Most Eminent Cardinal Prefect did counterpose the favorable opinion to his project which had been expressed to him by Bishops and competent persons, among them one of the Directors of the Work in a foreign country; and in the conviction that this was for the benefit of the Missions, he believed it was his duty to propose it; and appealing to the sole purpose we all have to do what is for the best good of the Missions, he ended the conversation which lasted about an hour. = [unsigned]"<sup>76</sup>

Therefore, in the light of the post-war situation and the *spirit of nationality of the time*, Van Rossum considered it advisable, as reported, "to nationalize the Work in the various countries in the sense that each would have its national center, but all would be subordinate to the higher center in Rome, where the supreme authority and the center of the Catholic Church is." This direction from Rome would remove the obstacle that now stands in the way of further development of the Work. The reason, therefore, for the planned change is to save the Work with its character of universality"<sup>77</sup>. According to the Prefect, the development of local FPOs had to be associated with a central government in Rome; the problems created for the FPO by nationalism could not be solved "until the center is in Rome"<sup>78</sup>.

With the legitimate and well-founded conviction that he could best serve the missions in accordance with the task assigned to him as Prefect of Propaganda, Van Rossum - as far as he was concerned - expressed in that meeting of May 29, 1919, his intention to proceed along the line undertaken, incorporating the ideas that could favor its realization"<sup>79</sup>.

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<sup>76</sup> APF, NS, an. 1922, vol. 731, ff. 44r-45v [or., datt.].

<sup>77</sup> APF, NS, an. 1922, vol. 731, f. 44v.

<sup>78</sup> APF, NS, an. 1922, vol. 731, f. 45r. The project would be realized a few months after the beginning of Pius XI's pontificate. "La centralisation à Rome des Œuvres missionnaires françaises, transformées en Œuvres Pontificales Missionnaires, opération tentée sans succès par Léon XIII, puis décidée par Benoît XV, est enfin mise en application par Pie XI immédiatement après son élection." PRUDHOMME, Claude, *Le Cardinal van Rossum et la politique missionnaire du Saint-Siège sous Benoit XV et Pie XI (1918-1932)*, in POELS, Vefie et alii (eds.), *Life with a mission: cardinal Willem Marinus van Rossum C.Ss.R. (1854-1932)*, Redactie Trajecta, Leuven 2011, p. 127.

Van Rossum's position can also be understood from what he wrote in a *Pro-Memorial of* October 26, 1919 about the conversation he had in Rome the day before with Cardinal Maurin Archbishop of Paris, in the passage in which he states that, after having explained the situation and the reasons, "I explained to him in a few words my project: Center in Rome; Propaganda assisted by an international Commission; money collected in the different countries administered there by a Commission; distribution made according to the indications received from Propaganda; organization of the clergy for the "Pious Union of the Clergy for the Missions," approved by the Holy Father and enriched with many privileges and Indulgences.

He [Maurin] admired the project; but, he said, we will be so, so sorry!

I answered: But Eminence, what are they going to lose? They will continue to collect and distribute according to the indications of Propaganda.

Yes, he replied, but it will no longer be international! He ended the conversation and withdrew. Rome, October 26, 1919. G.M. Van Rossum. Prefect": APF, NS, an. 1922, vol. 731, f. 10r [all text on ff. 9r-10v]. On f. 10v it is noted: "Delivered a copy to the Holy Father at the Audience of October 27, 1919".

<sup>79</sup> Devrete has spoken of a process characterized by *Romanization, clericalization and centralization*: DREVET, *Le financement des missions catholiques au XIXème siècle, entre autonomie laïque et centralité romaine. L'Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi (1822-1922)*, in *Chrétiens et Sociétés XVIe-XXIe siècles* 9 (2002), pp. 79-114, <https://doi.org/10.4000/chretienssocietes.4004> p. 8/21.

Cardinal Merry del Val, on the other hand, opposed the transfer of the headquarters of the OPF to Rome, although he was also convinced of the need to adopt corrective measures to improve the Work. His point of view, expressed in his capacity as Ponente, is contained in the ten typed sheets, signed and dated the day of the Epiphany of 1920 preserved in the aforementioned vol. 731 of the *New Series* collection.<sup>80</sup>

The same relationship with the vow of Cardinal Merry del Val can be summarized according to its threefold articulation, subsequently giving an account of extensive passages.

In the first part, the subject of Ponenza was introduced, with some observations that also explain the origin of the wealth of means of the Protestant missions in comparison with the Catholic ones,

The second part reflects on the contents of the *report* and the accompanying documentation and weighs the reorganization project against the problem of "nationalism", a phenomenon considered transversal to nations and not limited to France.

Finally, in the third part, Cardinal Merry del Val expressed his opposition to the relocation of the OPF Center and made some proposals to improve it.

#### Part I.

Merry del Val considers "serious and extremely delicate [...] the question submitted today to the judgment of this Sacred Congregation" and "the proposed reform is as laudable as ever. [...] the question that is today submitted to the judgment of this Sacred Congregation" and "the aim of the proposed reform is as laudable as ever, that is, to give to the Work itself a better character of universality and efficacy, necessary to attain more adequately its objective, and, therefore, to procure a greater contribution from the faithful of the whole world, to subsidize the immense and ever growing needs of the Catholic apostolate among the infidels, who number in the millions"; At the same time, he asked himself whether "for the most holy end to be attained, is the project which constitutes the principal object of this Pontifical Council, and which has as its basis the transfer from France to Rome of the center of the Work of the Propagation of the Faith, convenient and opportune, even supposing it to be truly efficacious? This is the question"<sup>81</sup>.

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<sup>80</sup> APF, NS, an. 1922, vol. 731, ff. 352-362 [or. , datt.]. To understand Merry Del Val's vision, it is perhaps significant to read what was written in 1840, collected in the Ponencia, about the good progress and *growth* of the Work and about the meaning attributed to three *qualities* that, if on the one hand could indicate different sensibilities in the OPF itself at that time, on the other hand, in some way, could have inspired the Propaganda project and in any case were contained in it: "For the good progress of the Work we recommend:

1. *Unity*; therefore, the donations of the registered faithful must not be used for any other pious work, not even for the benefit of particular missions, but must all be transmitted to the Council of Rome, recognized by the Holy See as a center of the missions like those of Lyon and Paris.

2. *Uniformity*; so that the principal publications of news concerning the Work start from the same center [f. 538v] of compilation; then it is requested that the less important ones be communicated to the Council of Lyons, before being printed. Uniformity also requires that no innovation be made in the nature of the Work, that the established amount of alms be always respected, and that they not be replaced by donations of objects, even sacred ones, such as books, ornaments, etc.

For the growth of the Work, therefore, *Universality* is recommended. Therefore, the piety of all the faithful is asked to promote this Work to the best of their ability [follows a list of all the "members" of the one Church, such as bishops, parish priests, etc.]. " *Brevi notizie sull'Opera Pia*, pp. 23-24; APF, *Acta*, an. 1919, vol. 290, ff. 538r-538v [pp. 23-24].

<sup>81</sup> APF, NS, an. 1922, vol. 731, f. 352.

Also for the former Secretary of State of Pius X, "the spread of the faith and the ministry of the Catholic apostolate is the work of divine grace" [f. 353].<sup>82</sup> and added that "with very limited resources and infinitely fewer than those available to the innumerable Protestant organizations, the Catholic apostolate achieves incomparably greater spiritual results, a confession repeatedly made by the same heterodox Societies, which spread billions and record supposed conversions on the basis of unlimited distributions of Bibles, conspicuous foundations of hospices, schools of profane sciences and works of charity"<sup>83</sup>. This implied a critical observation regarding the criterion of comparison used in the *Report*, based in fact on the amount of means available to Protestants and not on the truth of the Catholic proclamation and the greater *spiritual results* achieved by Catholicism. Moreover, such a "contrast certainly constitutes a tangible apology for the truth that has served and continues to serve to lead many Protestants to embrace the Catholic faith"<sup>84</sup>. Poverty of means was also a testimony that elicited conversions among those who did not lack them. The Speaker also offered an explanation as to why Protestants had more means: "1. because, in general, Protestants are richer; 2. because their Mission Societies are wealthier. 2. because their Mission Societies are often aided, directly and indirectly, by public agencies and their respective governments, which, having no internal concerns, use them for their colonial and political expansion. 3. because the needs of their religion and their works in the interior of their countries are less than ours, and because they can avail themselves to a greater extent of the help of public funds"<sup>85</sup>.

However, he too was convinced that material resources were indispensable for maintaining and extending evangelization to infidel peoples and that the opportunity should not be lost to obtain the greatest possible contribution from the faithful for the missions, especially in the face of the needs left by the World War. "To this end - the needs of the missions, he continued - together with the need to better affirm the universal character of the Pious Work for the Propagation of the Faith, it is proposed to transfer the headquarters to Rome, the center of Catholicism"<sup>86</sup>.

Although the Rapporteur agrees with the above-mentioned objectives - unity, universality, and effectiveness - he has not yet pronounced himself on the proposed means of achieving them: the transfer of the OPF headquarters to Rome.

Before making his observations on the *Report*, Merry del Val set forth what can be considered his methodological premise in approaching the question. He recognized the OPF that concerns us as a *historical fact of an ecclesiastical nature*, a particular historical reality that, within the history of the Church, was already a hundred years old: "It is now almost a hundred years since [f. 354] the Work has existed with its headquarters in France, widely linked to the Pontiffs, constantly encouraged by them, enriched with continuous favors, and pointed out to all the faithful as the principal center of every organization of this type and the principal organ of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda, for the support of the apostolate among the infidels of the two hemispheres."<sup>87</sup> The OPF was already an ecclesial reality linked to the Roman See for a century, recognized and

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<sup>82</sup> APF, *NS*, an. 1922, vol. 731, ff. 352-353.

<sup>83</sup> APF, *NS*, an. 1922, vol. 731, f. 353.

<sup>84</sup> APF, *NS*, an. 1922, vol. 731, f. 353.

<sup>85</sup> APF, *NS*, an. 1922, vol. 731, f. 353.

<sup>86</sup> APF, *NS*, an. 1922, vol. 731, f. 353.

<sup>87</sup> APF, *NS*, an. 1922, vol. 731, ff. 353-354.

supported by the pontiffs, a *human means blessed by God*<sup>88</sup> at the service of the Catholic apostolate, which deserved esteem and attention. For these reasons Merry del Val affirmed that "before subscribing to the 'Fiat' invoked by Monsignor Fréri to 'reform' and 'transform' the said Work, it is convenient, in my opinion, to ponder the reform project from all points of view, and to carefully measure the consequences, so as not to run the risk of losing what we have in our hands, without real and evident benefit."<sup>89</sup> Merry del Val's explicit reference to Bishop Fréri, whose ideas had been accepted in the Ponencia, drafted not without the assent of the Prefect of Propaganda, implied an implicit reference to Van Rossum's project or, at least, an invitation to vigilance of the "American theses."

## Part II.

The Speaker then analyzes the "main conclusions and arguments presented for the transfer of the Work's headquarters from France to Rome."<sup>90</sup>

The first referred to the problem of *nationalism*, that is, to "the exclusively French character of the Work, which would have created prejudices and misgivings among the other nationalities, would have produced reticence or at least indifference among Catholics of other countries towards the Work itself, and which would partly explain the deplorable limitation of the offerings, claiming that these would be greater if the center of the Opera were transferred to Rome."<sup>91</sup> In this regard, he observed, on the one hand, that if "unfortunately French nationalism is often shown to be very exaggerated [sic!] even in the religious field, that it often reaches excess in its manifestations, and that, despite the admirable zeal of the French missionaries and the heroism of their sacrifices, the tendency to identify the Catholic religion with French propaganda [f. 355] hurts the sensibilities of Catholics in other countries, and hinders the progress of evangelization in the Missions themselves", but on the other hand he also affirms that "it must be observed, however, that unfortunately, today, in our times, the fever of nationalism, so detrimental to the Church, and more acute after the war, has invaded all peoples, that the defect which is reproached to the French, is unfortunately manifested also in other nations, and that neither the Missionaries themselves are always exempt, nor the Institutes which direct their action"<sup>92</sup>. Not without some rhetoric he added:

"But will this deplorable inconvenience be remedied by transferring to Rome the center of the Work which hitherto existed in France? For my part, I doubt it very much. I believe that the possible center in Rome would soon find itself in a situation similar to that of France. [... And I fear," he continued, "that by bringing the center of the Work of the Propagation of the Faith to Rome under the present conditions, we will soon hear the same arguments wielded against the Propaganda that are wielded today against the center in France, and in addition we will have alienated the sympathies and the important contribution of French Catholics, who would be upset by such a measure; something which we wish to avoid, as the Eminent Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda has already said to the Cardinal Archbishop of Lyons last October, telling him [f. 356] that 'nothing disagreeable is intended to be done to France.'"<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> APF, NS, an. 1922, vol. 731, f. 354.

<sup>89</sup> APF, NS, an. 1922, vol. 731, f. 354.

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<sup>91</sup> APF, NS, an. 1922, vol. 731, f. 354.

<sup>92</sup> APF, NS, an. 1922, vol. 731, ff. 354-355.

<sup>93</sup> APF, NS, an. 1922, vol. 731, ff. 355-356.

The problem constituted by nationalism was considered by Merry del Val in its supranational historical reality, transversal to the peoples and not only inherent to France, concluding his reflection with an explicit reference to what Van Rossum had assured the Cardinal of Lyon. He also added that the Ponenza had nothing to reproach the central administration of the OPF for its "nationalistic" preferences in the allocation of contributions to the Missions, but that the Prefect of Propaganda himself had praised its impartiality. "It seems, then, on the whole, that the Council of the Work has been able to avoid the defect that France is reproached with of excessive national spirit."<sup>94</sup> Therefore, the first argument for the transfer to Rome is not as applicable to the French case as it could be to any other similar situation.

Regarding the tensions in the relationship between the OPF Center in Paris-Lyon and the Councils of other nations, Merry del Val considered some of them, including the case of North America:

"On the other hand, it is to be noted that the disagreements reported in the Paper on p. 44 between the Paris-Lyon and North American Councils, as well as the fact that the headquarters of the Work is in France, have not prevented a revival of the Missions in the United States, where the Catholic students alone have recently collected a million dollars, which they have presumably sent to France. If, therefore, the cause of the deplorable lack of subsidies is not to be found mainly in the circumstance that the center of the Work is in France, it may be necessary to find it elsewhere and to indicate suitable practical remedies."<sup>95</sup>

### Part III.

In the last part, the Cardinal Rapporteur made some proposals to correct and improve the OPF without the need to move its headquarters to Rome:

"From what I have just said, I do not intend to draw the conclusion that there is nothing to reform in the present operation of the Work, that there are no serious drawbacks, and much less that all the observations made in the Ponencia are unfounded. On the contrary. Several of the defects mentioned seem to me to be serious and worthy of the greatest consideration. They undoubtedly constitute an obstacle to the proper functioning of the Work, to its development and to a greater financial contribution from the faithful, a contribution which is rightly invoked, and which is evidently necessary. I wish to submit to Your Eminences' judgment some reforms, which could perhaps be introduced without moving, at least for the time being, the present headquarters of the Work".<sup>96</sup>

The *measures suggested* by Cardinal Merry del Val were four; the second and fourth concerned the collection and distribution of Mass alms and the sending of offerings to the headquarters in France; the first and third concerned the administration of the OPF and

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<sup>94</sup> APF, NS, an. 1922, vol. 731, f. 356.

<sup>95</sup> APF, NS, an. 1922, vol. 731, f. 356.

<sup>96</sup> APF, NS, an. 1922, vol. 731, f. 358.

the holding of an annual meeting in Propaganda. They are reproduced in their entirety below:<sup>97</sup>

1. "It has been pointed out by many that it is regrettable and inappropriate that the Work should be administered exclusively by laymen, not only in the economic part, but also in the managerial and disciplinary part. This complaint seems to me to be well-founded: in fact, it discredits the fact that the laity, however worthy of esteem and excellent Catholics they may be, should have the exclusive direction and administration of the principal organism at our disposal for sustaining the Catholic apostolate among the infidels. Therefore, there is reason to suppose that, in the last analysis, almost all the work of the Work is really in the hands of the Secretary, who is the only salaried employee: in fact, he directs the offices, writes the reports, submits the requests to the Council and handles the correspondence. To remedy this drawback, why not require that the head of the Work be an ecclesiastic, a prelate, perhaps even a bishop, perhaps already a missionary, appointed by the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda? In this way, it would also have the advantage of better connecting Paris with Lyon under one head; I say Paris with Lyon and not Lyon with Paris, because the center of Paris suffers the influence of the atmosphere of the capital and of politics, and from this point of view it would perhaps be preferable for the center of Paris to become a simple branch of Lyon, the traditional center of the Work, not seeing the practical usefulness of two centers of equal hierarchy. " <sup>98</sup>
2. "The collection and distribution of Mass alms is another point which, in my opinion, requires special attention. These alms should be collected and distributed outside of all ordinary administration and budgeting of the funds of the Work, and entirely out of the hands of the laity, who do not know how to appreciate adequately the delicacy of this matter. Why not prescribe that all Mass alms for the Missions be sent in future to the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda or kept at its disposal by some local ecclesiastical authority, which in turn would receive the appropriate faculties and the necessary directions for their distribution? " <sup>99</sup>
3. "Thirdly, I venture to make a proposal which, if feasible, could perhaps be the radical remedy for correcting and eliminating many, if not all, of the defects denounced, and which, while giving a strong impetus to the Work, would further accentuate its character of universality. That is to say, once a year, at a time to be determined, here in the Propaganda Palace itself, under the presidency of the Most Eminent Cardinal Prefect, and with the assistance of Monsignor Secretary, a Congress could be held, lasting two or three days, to which one or more representatives of the Work in Italy, Germany, Spain, Belgium, Holland, England, America, etc., would be summoned. The importance of the missionary activity of the Catholic Church well deserves a measure of this kind, even if it must be carried out with some difficulty and sacrifice; moreover, we see that Protestants, in order to organize their propaganda effectively, have recourse among other things to frequent Conferences, Meetings and Congresses of this nature. It is to be hoped that a Congress thus composed will not displease the French Center, since its leaders, in their reply to the pamphlet written by Monsignor Fréri, are not averse

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<sup>97</sup> Here again, we have opted for an extensive reproduction to facilitate the understanding of the genesis of the deliberations.

<sup>98</sup> APF, *NS*, an. 1922, vol. 731, f. 359.

<sup>99</sup> APF, *NS*, an. 1922, vol. 731, f. 359-360.

to accepting the participation of all nations in the organization of the Work. The task of the Congress, to be held annually, would be: to examine carefully the general situation and the state of the various Missions, illustrated by a full report to be made by the Monsignor Secretary of Propaganda - to give everyone an interest in all the Missions from a truly Catholic point of view, free from national prejudices - to give the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda the opportunity to point out the most urgent needs and to obtain the cooperation of all in making the principal allocations and distributions with a greater knowledge of the state of the Missions - to discuss and specify well the special appeals to be made to the charity of the faithful, as Archbishop Freri desires, and to spread more widely the knowledge of the Missions among the people - to examine the work of the various representatives of the Work sent to the different countries to collect donations, in order to stimulate their activity and, if necessary, to correct and change them - to make dispositions on the manner of publishing [f. 361] the Annals, coordinating and regulating other similar publications that seem defective, useless or superfluous - checking the principal expenses incurred during the year and giving guidelines for distributions and expenses according to the intentions of Propaganda, trying to suppress them when necessary, or, at least, to reduce to what is strictly necessary expenses outside the Missions, such as, for example, those paid for the maintenance of the organizations, representatives and proxies, which are very costly and which, instead of being used by the Missions, are often profitable for the individuals themselves and for other works, so that, by reducing these expenses, the Missions may be more benefited. It would seem that with the realization of the planned Congress, many prejudices would disappear and a greater harmony and exchange of understanding would be achieved among all those responsible for the Work of the Propagation of the Faith in the different countries, thus fostering an ever greater spirit of charity that knows no borders, that knows how to overcome all prevention of race and language, the charity of Our Lord Jesus Christ and of the true announcers of His Gospel, which is the only one and that which should reign above all in the field of the Catholic Missions."

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4. Regarding the sending of offerings to the headquarters in France, I believe that in particular cases, where there would be a considerable loss of money in the transmission of the sums collected, it could be allowed that these sums be kept temporarily in the places of origin, pending the corresponding instructions. In the event of an unforeseen and urgent situation, such as earthquakes, fires or other catastrophes, the local representative should be authorized, at least within certain limits, to send first aid directly to those affected, without the usual transmission from the Central Council in France. But in these cases, as in all others, the accounts should always be sent to Lyon, so that they appear in the General Budget of the Work, and this with the essential aim of preserving the unity of the Work itself.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> APF, *NS*, an. 1922, vol. 731, f. 359-360.

<sup>101</sup> APF, *NS*, an. 1922, vol. 731, ff. 359-360. To this he added: "I had reached this point in my report, when I received the last note from the Central Councils of Lyons and Paris to the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda on the present question. After having taken cognizance of this, I believe that I do not have to modify my conclusion, which, on the contrary, seems to me to be reinforced by this affirmation": f. 361.



If at the beginning of his intervention Merry del Val defined the issue on the agenda as *serious and extremely delicate*, if he considered the objective of the planned reorganization of the OPF as *laudable*, wondering however if it was *advisable* and *opportune*, assuming its *effectiveness*, the transfer *from France to Rome of the center of the Work of the Propagation of the Faith*, in the end he expressed his *negative opinion*, at least for the moment, regarding the transfer, and hoped to introduce in the functioning of the Work both the measures he had indicated and others that could be considered appropriate to the effect.

The ideas of Cardinal Merry del Val met with the approval of the cardinals gathered in Plenary Assembly, who accepted them in preference to those proposed in the *Conclusion of the Report* (which translated the original project of Cardinal Van Rossum) and made them their own, as can be seen from the text of the deliberations of the Plenary Assembly of January 12, 1920; with his confirmation, Benedict XV also made them his own, respecting the overall assessment made by the cardinals. If the Center of the Work of the Propagation of the Faith remained for the time being only in France, in Lyon, from where the OPF had started, a path was also opening up that was intended, as was hoped in the project of the Prefect of Propaganda, to conserve and deepen the *qualities of unity and universality with a view to greater effectiveness of the activity* in the various nations of the members of the Work.

## Concluding remarks

In light of the documentation considered in its fundamental parts, a series of considerations should now be made.

1. Starting from the general context provoked by the First World War, the multiplication of requests for help from the missions and the proven insufficiency of the funds collected by the OPF, in the Congregation of Propaganda Fide, on the basis of an embryonic project of Cardinal Prefect Van Rossum, approved by Pope Benedict XV, a study was launched to reorganize the Work of the Propagation of the Faith as a fundamental "instrument" to support the missions and their development in the service of evangelization.
2. With this reorganization, based on knowledge of the history of the OPF, its external problems and internal criticism, it was intended, on the one hand, to take care of "the two qualities that distinguish this pious Work from all others [and which] suffer renewed attacks from all sides"<sup>102</sup>, *unity* and *universality* (or *catholicity*), and, on the other hand, the *effectiveness of the* action of the OPF or the increase in fundraising and the development of the Work, since evangelization "in the common process of providence also needs material help."<sup>103</sup>
3. In the context of the *long century*, the 19th century, which began with the Congress of Vienna, ended with the Great War and was crossed by many phenomena among which *nationalism*, which also marked the first decades of the 20th century, stood out, it was necessary to avoid and overcome the risk of particularistic fragmentation and to favor the realization of the task of the OPF. In the project outlined in the *Report of the Pontifical Commission* we have examined, the Apostolic See and the Congregation of Propaganda Fide at the service of the missions represented the antidote to *nationalist* pretensions and the condition of possibility - at least organizationally - for the development of the OPF; Therefore, a process was initiated, not unknown to the historiography of the Work itself, which sought the transfer to Rome of the See of the OPF and the drafting of a new Statute, measures that translated the direction proposed by Cardinal Prefect Van Rossum with the support of Benedict XV, and which would be carried out in May 1922 by means of a *motu proprio* of Pius XI.
4. A year after the first formulation, the Cardinals of Propaganda were summoned to a Plenary Meeting to discuss the project of reorganization of the Work elaborated in Propaganda and, on January 12, 1920, they deliberated in another direction, accepting the direction and the measures proposed by the Cardinal Rapporteur, Merry del Val, among which was the maintenance of the headquarters of the OPF in France but only in Lyon (thus respecting the history of the Work and the "local" needs, but at a distance from the national policy of Paris), together with the necessary strengthening of the relationship with Rome. As a whole, the deliberations, later confirmed by Benedict XV, seemed aimed above all at promoting awareness of the need to rediscover the origins of the OPF according to the dimensions of *unity*, *universality* and *efficacy* inherent in the founding experience of Jaricot, entrusted to the members of the OPF and confirmed by the Pontiffs; A careful reading of the *refusal* to the projected transfer of the OPF

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<sup>102</sup> APF, *Minutes*, an. 1919, vol. 290, f. 449r.

<sup>103</sup> APF, *Minutes*, an. 1919, vol. 290, f. 378v.

headquarters to Rome and the *affirmation of the* three deliberate directives, allows us to grasp, at that time and beyond the initial differences, the common will to support the OPF and to establish a fruitful relationship between the "center" and the "periphery", at the various levels and expressions, for the OPF and for the missions;

5. The idea, accepted by the cardinals, of the annual meeting to be held in Rome, at the headquarters of Propaganda (Annual Congress), where - clergy and laity, "Rome" and "Nations" - would work together for the missions, was the sign of a perspective that could be defined as *co-responsibility* (expression of that *charity* desired by both Van Rossum and Merry del Val) since it implied a double invitation: to the availability and deepening not only effectively but also, so to speak, affectively of the original bond with the Petrine See and with Propaganda Fide, in the attached lay presidents of Lyon and of the National Councils of the OPF, and to the sharing of information on the missions and of the consequent decisions, in the Roman ecclesiastics, in a climate of mutual esteem and of common generation, even in the different responsibilities of government established by their own competencies.
6. Finally, if the question of the cardinals' positions on the aforementioned freedom of the faithful in the exercise of the destination of the offerings remains open, there is a lack in the deliberations taken: They had dealt with unity and universality and intended to relaunch the OPF for greater efficiency in the search for funds for the missions, thus recalling the almsgiving of money (material alms), but there was no mention, not even an exhortative appeal, of the other almsgiving characteristic of the OPF founded by Pauline Jaricot, viz, This is constitutive of the experience of personal sanctification and communion among the members of the OPF and with the distant missionaries, always underlined by the Pontiffs in the granting of favors and spiritual graces to the OPF as a movement of lay missionary spirituality recognized and supported by them; As the Catechism in use at the time indicated, such a donation was necessary because "God commands it and, ordinarily, only if one prays, He grants spiritual and temporal graces,"<sup>104</sup> including the grace of "spreading the faith in the world. "<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> *Catechismo della Dottrina Cristiana* pubblicato per ordine del sommo pontefice PIO X, Tipografia Poliglota Vaticana 1912, n. 419.

<sup>105</sup> APF, *Minutes*, an. 1919, vol. 290, f. 378v.