

Léo Volker

Architect of Aggiornamento

1957-1967

Aylward Shorter M.Afr.

Rome 2013

Stampa Istituto Salesiano Pio XI - Via Umbertide, 11 - 00181 Roma
Tel. : 06.78.27.819 - Fax : 06.78.48.333 - E-Mail tipolito@pcn.net
Finito di stampare : aprile 2013

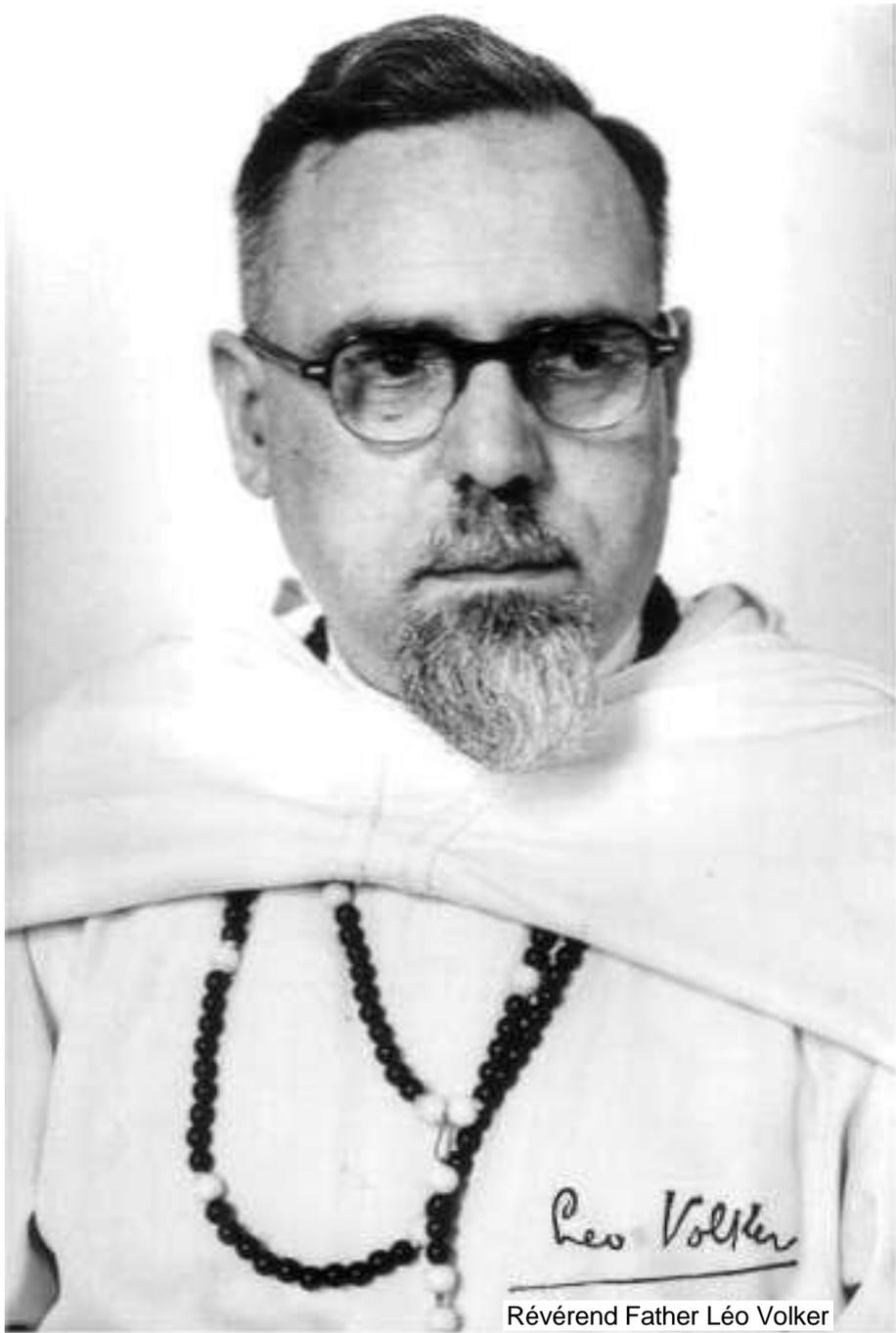
Foreword

The meeting of the History Research team held in Rome from 5th to 7th May 2011 suggested that I should prepare material for the study and teaching of the period 1947-1967. This was a period in which Africa and our Society experienced some of the most sweeping changes in our history. Reading and research for this period was carried out in London in 2011 and in Rome in February 2012. A dossier of background and working papers, amounting to some 40,000 words, was prepared. In addition, material was included about Missionaries of Africa who served as military chaplains, and who were demobilized between 1945 and 1954. In 1957 the Society included up to 600 former soldiers, of whom one in ten had served as officially designated military chaplains. This fact had much to do with the Society's preparedness for, and expectation of, change.

In November 2012 François Richard and Jean-Claude Ceillier proposed that the dossier should form the basis of a volume in the History Series, focussing on the contribution of Léo Volker, superior general from 1957 to 1967. I am grateful to Jean-Claude Ceillier and the History Research team, and to François Richard, Juan-José Oses and Fritz Stenger in the General Archives, Library and Photo Collection at Via Aurélia, for all their help. I am grateful to those who responded to my appeal for information and to those who kindly answered my email and telephone queries. They are acknowledged in the text.

Aylward Shorter, M.Afr.

London, November 2012



Révérend Father Léo Volker

Volker's Election and Character

Léo Volker (1906-1970)¹ was elected Superior General by the Society's nineteenth General Chapter in July 1957, the first non-French Superior General in the Society's history. He was aged 51. For the previous decade he had been an Assistant to Bishop Louis Durrieu, superior general from 1947 to 1957. Before that, he had been on the staff of Kipalapala Senior Seminary in Tanganyika Territory (Tanzania) for fifteen years, and its Rector for more than a decade. He was much appreciated by the seminarians, although they were somewhat in awe of him.² Volker, however, was far from authoritarian. On the contrary, he was a good listener, excelled in team work and was moderately gregarious, playing cards in the evening with members of the Generalate community and enjoying the occasional glass of wine and a cigar.³ He possessed sound, common sense and displayed a solid, traditional piety.⁴ In chapel, he had a loud voice which brought about a saying among the student-priests: "*De ore leonis, libéra nos Domine.*"⁵

Volker's unpretentiousness, his spirituality and his espousal of the 1957 Chapter's concerns about Ignatian spirituality, poverty, continuing work on the Directory of the Constitutions and concern for the Brothers' formation made capitulants feel that they were entrusting the Society to a safe pair of hands. Yet, less than eighteen months after his election, the situation of the Church and the world underwent a dramatic change. In the Church the starting point for this was the election of a new Pope, John XXIII in October 1958 who, in less than three months, announced the celebration of an Ecumenical Council. The next eight years of Volker's superiorate saw the growing autonomy of the African Church and - the often violent - attainment of political independence in

1 Dates of birth and death are placed in brackets after names of Missionaries of Africa. In the case of departure from the Society, an asterisk is placed after the second date.

2 Society of Missionaries of Africa, Father Léo Volker, Rome 1971, pp. 6-8.

3 Ibid., p. 10; also communication from Michael Louis Fitzgerald, 8th July 2011.

4 He was very much impressed by Marian apparitions, communication from Wim Wouters 15th August 2011.

5 "*Deliver us, O Lord, from the lion's mouth*" (Ps 21,22). Fitzgerald, communication of 8th July 2011.

a majority of African countries. As a result, these years were among the most challenging of the Society's history.

Africanization and Independence ^{5b}

When Pius XII died in 1958, there were some twenty African bishops in the whole of Africa. By 1967 there were twenty-six African bishops in dioceses that had been confided to the Society alone.⁶ In Africa, as a whole, there were about seventy.⁷ There was also an African Cardinal, who was a White Father: Paul Zoungou of Ouagadougou.⁸ The 1960s witnessed the political emancipation of virtually all the colonial African countries, in some cases after violent resistance or mayhem. Six Missionaries of Africa met violent deaths in Algeria and twelve in Congo. Although the Society was to attain its greatest number of members (3,618) in 1967, there were already signs of a drop in vocations. In 1967-1968 came the first indications of Worldwide student unrest and what came to be called the "Revolution of Expressive Disorder".⁹ Volker was innately conservative and had no particular desire to depart from the path marked out for him by his predecessors, but very soon he and his advisers were overtaken by events. They confronted the unexpected challenges with good sense, courage and generosity.

When Volker was elected Superior General in 1957 there were five African Bishops in the Society's mission territories. Four were diocesan clergy and one a Missionary of Africa. When he left office ten years later there were twenty-six living African Bishops in the Society's territories (two had died, one of them a Missionary of Africa). Three of the twenty-six were Missionaries of Africa and the other twenty-three were diocesan clergy. One of the latter (Emmanuel Nsubuga) had applied unsuccessfully to join the Society.

5b Dates of Independence of African Countries during Volker's mandate: p. 78.

6 Two had died. See below.

7 This is an estimate based on the number when Vatican II closed. In the 1970s there was a rapid increase in the number of African bishops.

8 Laurean Rugambwa, Vicar Apostolic of Lower Kagera, Tanzania, was created the first African Cardinal in 1960, Zoungou was one of four more cardinals created for Africa in 1965. The other three were Owen McCann of Cape Town, Stephanos Sidarouss of Alexandria and Léon-Etienne Duval of Algiers. In 1969 Joseph Malula of Kinshasa and Jérôme Rakotomalala of Madagascar were created cardinals.

9 Cf. Arbuckle, G, *Refounding the Church*, Orbis Books, New York, 1993.

African Bishops with their diocese and date of episcopal ordination between 1957 and 1967

Bayala, Anthyme (Koudougou 1966)
Bigirumwami, Aloys (Nyundo 1952)
Busimba, Joseph (Goma 1960)
Butibubage, Rénatus (Mwanza 1965)
Chabukasansha, Clemens (Kasama 1965)
Chitsulo, Cornélius (Dedza 1956)
Ddungu, Adrian (Masaka 1961)
Dery, Peter Poreku (Wa 1960)
Kihangire, Cyprian (Hoima 1965)
Kiwanuka, Joseph (M.Afr., Masaka 1939, Kampala-Rubaga 1961, died 1966)
Kuba, Thomas (Mahagi 1962)
Makarakiza, André (M.Afr., Ngozi 1962)
Mala, Noël (Kasongo 1963 - died 1964)
Mihayo, Marko (Tabora 1960)
Msakila, Charles (Karema 1958)
Mukombe, Timothée Pirigisha (Kasongo 1966)
Mulindwa, Aloys (Bukavu 1965)
Mulolwa, Joseph (Baudouinvillle 1966)
Nkalanga, Gervasi (Kabale 1966)
Nsubuga, Emmanuel (Kampala 1966, created Cardinal 1976)
Ntuyahaga, Michael (Bujumbura 1959)
Rugambwa, Laurean (Ixiwer-Kagera 1951, created Cardinal 1960, Bukoba 1961)
Sangare, Luc (Bamako 1962)
Sangu, James (Mbeya 1966)
Tapsoba, Denis (M.Afr., Ouahigouya 1966)
Ukec, Gabriel (Bunia 1964)
Yougbaré, Dieudonné (Koupela 1956)
Zoungrana, Paul (M.Afr., Ouagadougou 1960, created Cardinal 1965)

It had been decided by the 1947 and 1957 Chapters that, when a diocesan priest became Bishop of a White Father diocese, a contract should be drawn up between him and the Society. This decision was echoed in the Missionary Decree *Ad Gentes* of December 1965.¹⁰ Such a contract was not necessary when a White Father (African or not) became Bishop. Missionaries were assigned to a region and it was the duty of the Regional Superior to allocate them to the various dioceses. Cardinal Rugambwa and other African Diocesan Bishops were not happy with this procedure and wanted to negotiate directly with the Superior General and his Council. Their efforts were unsuccessful.¹¹

Contracts were for a specified, limited time. They concerned personnel and also temporalities and finances. It is surprising that only five diocesan contracts of this period have been identified in the General Archives of the Society. They are the contracts for Kabgayi/Nyundo, Karema, Wa, Kasongo and Tabora.¹² The conclusion would seem to be, therefore, that Regionals were unsuccessful on the whole in obtaining contracts from newly appointed African Bishops during this period. The new Bishops may have felt themselves to be in a strong position and to have relied on negotiation with the Regional over each appointment.¹³ There were, of course, no precedents for this novel situation, and neighbouring dioceses that were in the hands of White Father Bishops needed no contract. The General Council corresponded with virtually all the African Bishops listed above. In some cases, the Superior General was asked to make recommendations and even submit the traditional *terna* of three names that was required when members of the Society were presented for episcopal appointments.

10 *Ad Gentes*, 17.

11 AGMAfr 863/2 - Correspondence with Cardinal Rugambwa.

12 There were other kinds of contract for appointments to e.g. *Secrétariats* of Episcopal Conférences and Seminaries.

13 This would seem to be the conclusion drawn from the correspondence with Cardinal Rugambwa, already referred to.

The five diocesan contracts identified for this period are as follows:

Nyundo (Kabgayi) (Rwanda), (AGMAfr 542001): Contract between the Vicars Apostolic of Kabgayi and Nyundo (Bishops Aloys Bigirumwami and Laurent Deprimoz M.Afr. 1885-1962) January 2nd 1953. Nyundo was to be given the following mission stations staffed by White Fathers and taken from Kabgayi: Muhororo, Kinoni and a new mission station at Nyundo itself. The sum fixed for compensation was 250,000 Congo Francs. Birambo was to be given to African Priests and some African Priests from Kabgayi would be on loan to Nyundo. (NB: This is basically a contract between a White Father Bishop and an African Diocesan Bishop.)

Karema (Tanzania): (AGMAfr 70000188): Contract with Bishop Charles Msakila March 25th 1961. The Bishop will make appointments to ecclesiastical functions. White Father traditions of apostolic work are to be respected by the Bishop. Included is an agreement on temporalities and finances. The contract is valid for 3 years.

Wa (Ghana): (AGMAfr 68500554): Contract with Bishop Peter Poreku Dery 1960. The contract is for three years. Signed May 28th 1960.

Kasongo (Congo): (AGMAfr 73300285): Mgr. Noël Mala was appointed Administrator for Richard Cleire M.Afr. (1901-1968), December 7th 1962. (AGMAfr 73300286): Cleire resigned in 1963 and Mala was appointed on June 17th of the same year. (AGMAfr 73300315) Mala died July 31st 1964. Willem Embrechts (1912-2009) was appointed Administrator. Timothée Pirigisha Mukombe appointed Bishop 29th September 1966.

Tabora (Tanzania): Cornélius Bronsveld M.Afr. (1906-1980) was obliged to resign and Mgr. Marco Mihayo was appointed archbishop June 21st 1960. (AGMAfr 70100298). Contract. Signed 23 January 1961.

The Dutch "Golden Age" of Mission

Volker's personal qualities and his experience commended him to the Chapter that elected him. However, the fact that he came from the Netherlands was far from irrelevant at this particular juncture of Church history. His ten years at the helm of the Society coincided with the apogee of Dutch Catholicism. For decades Catholics in the Netherlands had been a minority dominated by a Protestant ruling class. In the post-war years Catholics became the majority Church (30% of the population). They had a higher ratio of priests and religious to the Catholic population than any other European country. Their missionary activity was unequalled. Although they represented 2% of the world's Catholics, they provided 11% of its missionary priests. Separate Catholic social institutions, known colloquially as "the pillars" had been set up to insulate Dutch Catholics from pluralism. The Dutch Church possessed its own newspapers, radio stations, TV channels, journals, universities, schools and unions. According to Jan Bots, a Jesuit theologian and sociologist, this tight network allowed a speedy indoctrination of the entire Dutch Church and eventually hastened its decline¹⁴. Edward Schillebeeckx O.P., the pupil of Congar, became the chief spokesman of this new Church. He was the Belgian born professor of theology at the Catholic university of Nijmegen in the Netherlands.

In 1966 the Dutch Catechism was published, a confident restatement of the Catholic Faith by the leaders of a newly prosperous and questioning Church. In its rational paraphrase of Biblical and theological symbolism it resembled in many ways the writing of early twentieth century modernists. Paul VT convened a mixed commission to study the text and this resulted in the addition of a lengthy appendix by the Dutch Bishops. By the end of Volker's superiorate, Dutch Catholics were beginning to regard Church authorities with undisguised hostility and disdain. In fact, four months before the 1967 Chapter, Volker addressed a letter to the Society on obedience, quoting Paul VT's lament at the spirit of intolerance, indiscipline

¹⁴ J. Bots S.J., *Documentation on Dutch Catholicism on the Eve of the Papal Visit*, New York, 1985. Cf. also: Gilchrist, Michael, "Growth of a "new church": the Dutch experiment", AD2000, Vol.1, N° 4 (July 1988), p.14.

and emancipation that was invading the Church.¹⁵ Volker did not live to see the collapse that followed in the Netherlands and the squandering by Dutch Catholics of their Catholic heritage in the name of renewal.¹⁶

In the meantime, however, there was a short lived Dutch "golden age" of mission. In the Society of Missionaries of Africa, the Province of the Netherlands was now third in size (with 516 members), after the original areas of recruitment in France (911) and Belgium (686).¹⁷ The great bulwark of Catholicism and of the Society in Belgium, it should not be forgotten, was Flemish (Dutch) - speaking Flanders, which had many ties with the Netherlands. Dutch missionaries contributed in large measure to the optimism and progressive thinking of the African Church during these years.¹⁸ The Dutch/Flemish White Father luminaries, whose work will be examined below, included Antoon Wouters (1908-1965), Jozef Blomjous (1908-1992), Joseph Geerdes (1915-1977), Théo van Asten (1922-) and Guy Mosmans.(1910-1983)¹⁹

Two Friends: Léo Volker and Antoon Wouters

Léo Volker was born at Veghel, a village situated between s'Hertogenbosch and Eindhoven²⁰. His family had moved there from Germany around 1850 and one of his brothers became the Burgomaster²¹. Two elder brothers became priests in local parishes and two others became industrialists at Veghel.²² Together with two friends, who came from nearby villages, Léo Volker took French lessons at Eerde, during his primary schooling at Ruwenberg. The friends were Antoon Wouters

15 PE 574, January 1967, pp.6-10.

16 Gilchrist, op.cit. p.4.

17 Statistics quote in PE 516, June 1961, p.344.

18 Cf. Hastings, Adrian, *The Church in Africa 1450-1950*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1994, p.609.

19 Guy Mosmans, was Flemish.

20 Thèse biographical notes are based on *Father Léo Volker* 1971, p.4, and Wim Wouters' Letter to the author of 15th August 2011. Wim is the nephew of Antoon.

21 Mayor.

22 Information from Gérard van Asperen, author of the Volker Family History (in preparation), through the kindness of Sjef Donders and Harrie van der Riet, email of March 22nd 2012.

and Rini Bekkers (1908-1966).²³ Up to his death in 1965, Wouters remained very close to Volker, and during their scholasticate at Carthage they shared details of their spiritual life with each other. Bekkers became a diocesan priest and was consecrated Archbishop of s'Hertogenbosch in 1960. Bekkers brought the celebrated Edward Schillebeeckx with him to the Second Vatican Council as his peritus and paid frequent visits to Volker at the Generalate during the Council. Although already terminally ill, Bekkers presided at the funeral of Wouters in 1965. Volker entered the novitiate at Maison Carrée in 1927 and studied theology at Carthage from 1928-1932. He took the missionary oath in 1931 and was ordained priest in the following year. In the same year, he went to Kipalapala Seminary, where he stayed until called to Maison Carrée as a General Assistant in 1947.



Antoon Wouters.

Antoon Wouters was ordained priest at Carthage in 1933. He was appointed to the teaching staff of Parella (Italy) and then to s'Heerenberg, where he spent the war years.²⁴ The parish clergy of s'Heerenberg were imprisoned in German concentration camps and Wouters became the acting parish priest. On one occasion, with remarkable courage, he faced down an armed Gestapo officer²⁵. In 1947, when his friend Léo Volker joined the General Council in Algiers, Wouters was appointed Procurator General of the Society in Rome, and the responsibility for overseeing the building and installation of the Generalate at Via Aurélia fell largely to him. In 1954 he became postulator for the canonization of the twenty-two Blessed Martyrs of Uganda²⁶. At this time, the

23 Wilhelmus Marinus Bekkers.

24 Cf. his biography in PE 565, February 1966, pp.92-97.

25 Wouters and others told this story at the official closing of s'Heerenberg in 1958. The author was present on this occasion.

26 In 1958 he also became postulator for the cause of Blessed Charles de Foucauld, cf, PE 480, May 1958, p. 178.

cause of the twenty-two martyrs was in the doldrums and there was no progress since their beatification thirty-four years previously. It was decided, as a counsel of despair, to seek the canonization of a single martyr, Charles Lwanga, alone. This strategy was adopted in 1958²⁷.

The situation changed with the accession of Pope John XXIII. In 1960 the Congregation of Rites agreed to the introduction of the cause of all twenty-two martyrs, and a decree to this effect was signed on May 10th 1961²⁸. Wouters' knowledge of Rome and the Curia was crucial. His faith in the Martyrs' cause was unshakable and he became immersed in an unceasing round of activity, raising funds, documenting miracles, commissioning artists and confronting the venality of not a few Curial officials²⁹. He was able to create a whole movement of collaboration and interest around himself. Wouters believed in the ecumenical importance of the canonization and knew that it would have an immense impact on Africa, and indeed the world.

The canonization by Paul VI in St. Peter's Basilica in October 1964 was a triumph. It was attended by more than forty Cardinals and by Bishops attending the Second Vatican Council from all over the world³⁰. Moreover, it was immediately followed by the most substantial conciliar debate on the missionary activity of the Church. His lifework accomplished, Wouters died on Christmas Day 1965 at Etten near Breda. He was 57. Volker was with his friend in the last months of his life, and it was he who gave him the news that his illness was terminal.³¹ In his spiritual testament he wrote: "Holy Martyrs of Uganda, whose cause I have served with my whole heart, help our missionaries to make Christ live in Africa and pray for me".³²

27 PE 481, June 1958, p. 231.

28 PE 518, Aug-Sept 1961, pp. 403-405.

29 The author was a priest-student in Rome in 1962-1963 and was aware of all this activity.

30 PE 553, December 1964, pp. 504-514; Linden, Ian, *Global Catholicism*, London Hurst, 2009, p.75.

31 PE 565, February 1966, pp. 57-60; 92-97.

32 *Ibid.*

Jozef Blomjous

Probably, the greatest luminary of the Dutch "Golden Age" of mission was Jozef Blomjous³³. He had been ordained at Carthage in 1934 and was immediately appointed to the staff of Nyegezi Junior Seminary, outside Mwanza, in Tanganyika (Tanzania). Nyegezi, with its striking rock formations, on the southern shore of Lake Victoria, became the favoured arena for many of his foundations and activities. His first project there was to build a great library for his collection of books and periodicals.



Bishop Jozef Blomjous.

Blomjous was a man of vast learning, a polyglot who spoke seven modern languages and also read Latin, Greek and Hebrew with ease. In 1946 he became Vicar Apostolic of Musoma-Maswa, an area that was cut from Mwanza Vicariate. It was given to the Maryknoll Missionaries four years later, when Blomjous succeeded Anthony Oomen (1876-1957), as Vicar Apostolic of Mwanza. In 1953 Mwanza became a residential diocese.

As bishop, Blomjous became a missionary strategist in the tradition of Lavigerie, preferring, however, to shun the limelight and to work behind the scenes. At Nyegezi he founded the Social Training Centre (Institute) in 1960 and this has today become the nucleus of Saint Augustine's University of Tanzania (SAUT). At Nyegezi he also built a re-search centre, to attract social anthropologists and other academics carrying out research in Tanzania at the time³⁴. He also built a retreat house atop a rocky outcrop at Nyegezi. In 1961, he was the principal founder of the Tanganyika (Tanzania) Episcopal Conference, and in 1962 the Inter-territorial Meeting of Bishops in Eastern Africa (ITE-

³³ These biographical notes are largely taken from PE 842, 1993/6, pp.312-316. The author had numerous meetings with Bishop Blomjous and was a frequent visitor to Nyegezi.

³⁴ It later became the Provincial Headquarters of the Missionaries of Africa in Tanzania.

BEA), of which he became the first Chairman ³⁵. This ground breaking initiative was the first international episcopal association in Africa. In 1964 it became AMECEA (the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa), comprising Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia and Malawi. It now includes also Eritrea, Ethiopia and Sudan, with Somalia, Djibouti and Mozambique as associate members.

In 1962 Blomjous founded the Bukumbi Pastoral Institute for socio-religious research. In 1967 it was taken over by the Tanzania Episcopal Conference and became the Tanzania Pastoral and Research Institute (TAPRI) ³⁶.

With the convocation of the Second Vatican Council, Blomjous' sphere of action was enlarged considerably. He quickly contacted all the personalities connected with the Council. Not only was he involved in the work of the preparatory commissions, becoming himself a permanent consultant of the Commission on the Laity, but he helped to set up a Pan-African Secretariat to co-ordinate the contributions of Bishops from Africa. Cardinal Rugambwa was its president, while Blomjous and Archbishop Jean Zoa of Yaounde (Cameroun) were the vice-presidents, effectively responsible for its running ³⁷. With the ending of the Council, Blomjous hastened to resign his see to make way for an African successor. He was only 57. Because of his frequent absences from his diocese, an auxiliary had been appointed in 1959. This was Bishop Rénatus Butibubage Lwamosa who became Bishop of Mwanza when Blomjous resigned in 1965.

An important, though indirect, contribution to the work of the Council was the *African Ecclesiastical (Ecclesial) Review* (AFER), another brainchild of Blomjous who convinced Joop Geerdes (1915-1977) to launch it in 1959. The last twenty years of his active life, when he was based at Jerusalem and then Rome, were largely spent in making known, through lectures and publications, the teachings and decisions of the Council. He died at Boxtel in the Netherlands in 1992. He was a man of remarkable gifts, a great missiologist and a champion of the African Church.

³⁵ PE 519, October 1961, pp. 460-463.

³⁶ TAPRI later moved to Kipalapala, and more recently to Dar es Salaam.

³⁷ PE 532, December 1962, pp.621-623; PE 544, January 1964, p. 13.

Joop Geerdes

Joop Geerdes, the founder and first editor of AFER was born at Schiedam in the Netherlands in 1915³⁸. He attended the junior seminaries of the White Fathers and entered the Novitiate of the Society at Maison Carrée. He was a member of the first group to study theology at s'Heerenberg in 1936. After ordination in 1940, he taught philosophy in the Netherlands and attended courses at the Catholic University of Louvain (Leuven) in Belgium, before being appointed to the staff of Katigondo Major Seminary in Uganda in 1954. He was a gifted teacher



- a "re-

al live wire". Apart from some short bouts of pastoral work in Uganda, he remained at Katigondo for eighteen years. It was there that Bishop Blomjous sought him out in 1957. Geerdes had apparently arrived independently at the same conclusion as Blomjous about the need for an English language counterpart to the *Revue du Clergé Africain* in francophone Africa³⁹. Blomjous convinced him to start AFER, and Geerdes made it his lifework. Almost all the editorial and management work was carried out by Geerdes alone and he travelled all over the continent to promote the review and organize its distribution. AFER was launched in 1959, in time for the Second Vatican Council. In 1972 Geerdes brought the review under the auspices of AMECEA and moved with it to the AMECEA Pastoral Institute at Gaba, Uganda.

Geerdes' vision for the review was essentially pastoral and the articles that he solicited from authors had to be (in his own phrase) "practico-practical". It was also a forum for general discussion and decidedly not an organ of the magisterium, even though it included some official docu-

38 These biographical notes are based on PE 690, 1978/5, pp. 284-289. The author served on the editorial board of AFER from 1968-1977, and lived with Geerdes at Gaba from 1972 to 1975. He contributed numerous articles to the review.

39 It was produced by the Jesuits in Mayidi, Congo.

ments. Appearing at the very moment when the Second Vatican Council was meeting, AFER was an immediate success and it spread far beyond the confines of the Society of Missionaries of Africa⁴⁰. In 1976 the AME-CEA Pastoral Institute was forced by political events in Uganda to move to Kenya and Geerdes had a heart attack at this very juncture⁴¹. Back in Holland, he was briefly Secretary of the Netherlands Province before dying in 1977 after two further heart attacks. There is no doubt of his seminal importance to the African Church, as AFER's founder and first editor.

Théo van Asten

Théo van Asten (1922-1974*) was born at Leende in the diocese of s'Hertogenbosch⁴². His secondary schooling and philosophy studies were with the White Fathers in the Netherlands. Because of the Second World War, his novitiate was also spent at Esch in the Netherlands. He then moved to the scholasticate of s'Heerenberg where he was ordained by Bishop Durrieu in 1948. After further studies in Rome, at the Angelicum and Biblicum in 1948-1951,



Théo van Asten.

he taught for three years at Monteviot Major Seminary in Scotland and was appointed to Kipalapala Senior Seminary in 1955. Three years later, in 1958, he became Rector of the Seminary, shortly after his predecessor in that office had become Superior General. He was himself destined to succeed Volker as Superior General in 1967. This is not the place to consider his career after 1967. It is sufficient to say that he was a brilliant and innovative seminary rector. He had contacts all over Tanzania and, besides his native Dutch, spoke English, Swahili, French, German and Italian fluently. His

40 CIPA continuée! to publish its French bulletins until 1966 and Petit Echo was also basically in French.

41 AFER became part of Gaba Publications thereafter. It continues publication up to this day.

42 Cf. biographical notes in PE 581, August-September 1967, pp. 383-389.

greatest gift was his ability to communicate with others and he was hero-worshipped by his students⁴³. Before attending the 1967 Chapter as an elected delegate of the Tanzania Region, he had built extensively at Kipalapala and had anticipated much of the aggiornamento which the Chapter envisaged for seminaries in its curriculum.

At the 1967 Chapter the Tanzania Regional, Bernard van Amelsvoort, led the party which supported van Asten's candidacy for superior general, but this was strongly opposed by his other Dutch compatriot, Léo Volker, the incumbent superior general. As a result, the election was dead-locked and went as far as six ballots, the limit foreseen by the Constitutions. Van Asten was elected at the "eleventh hour" when the Chapter was preparing to ask Propaganda Fide to arbitrate⁴⁴. The election took place at the end of the 1967 Chapter's first session, in the last days of May.

Guy Mosmans (1910-1983)



Guy Mosmans.

A Missionary of Africa who was disappointed with the 1957 Chapter was Guy Mosmans (1910-1983), the Provincial of Belgium⁴⁵. Mosmans had adopted the concept of aggiornamento before it became current in Catholic circles and was far ahead in his thinking about the missionary Church. What was needed was not surface adaptation but a real aggiornamento, that is to say, according to Bishop B. C. Butler's definition of this Italian watchword, "a complex of radical solutions", even a "true cultural and social transformation".⁴⁶ Mosmans' articles in the *Revue Nouvelle*

43 The author of this essay stayed many times at Kipalapala in 1964-1967. One of the students, Casimir Kuhenga, showed him the biography he was writing of Theo van Asten!

44 Information from Patrick Fitzgerald (1925-), March 4th 2012 and Georges-Albert Mondor (1920-2012), February 23rd 2012.

45 Cf. PE n°746, 1984, pp.52-59.

46 Butler, B. C. "*The Aggiornamento of Vatican II*", p. 3, quoting François Houtart, "*L'Église et le monde*", p.18, in *Vatican II - Voice of the Church*, 2010.

dealt provocatively with the Church's confrontation with colonialism and imperialism and with the cultural imperialism of the Church in Africa. He followed up these articles with a book entitled *L'Église à l'heure de l'Afrique* ("The Church in Africa's Hour") in 1961. Mosmans was in the Congo from 1960 to 1972, helping to set up a general secretariat for the country's episcopal conference. This meant that he could have no direct influence on the debates at the Second Vatican Council in Rome. However, his publications certainly helped to prepare the way for the Council and its ideas among members of the Society and missionaries generally.

After ordination, Guy Mosmans studied theology at the Angelicum in 1936.⁴⁷ His first appointments in Bukavu in 1938-1952 were both pastoral and educational. These sixteen years in Africa gave him a remarkable insight into the issues confronting the Congo and other African countries on the eve of political independence. In 1952 he was appointed Provincial of Belgium and eight years later he became Secretary-General of the Congolese Episcopal Conference, with the task of setting up the secretariat itself. He remained in this post for twelve years until he was expelled by the Congo government in 1972. As Belgian Provincial he played a rôle in the foundation by Louvain of Lovanium University in Kinshasa in 1954. He had influential contacts with the Belgian government, parliament and king, advocating decolonization of the Congo without delay. From 1957 to 1960 he was official representative to the Belgian colonial office, of the Missions in Congo, Rwanda and Burundi.

Mosmans' publications were extensive and important. These mostly appeared in *La Revue Nouvelle*, and were, in part, a reaction to the missed opportunity of the 1957 Chapter. Two works that appeared in 1958 were particularly outspoken.⁴⁸ In these he pointed out that colonialism was incompatible with mission and that the Church had been an accomplice in the destruction of African culture.

Mosmans was impressed with the symposium produced by *Présence Africaine* in 1956, *Des prêtres noirs s'interrogent* and saw it as évidence

47 This account is based on: PE 746, 1984, pp. 52-59, his necrological profile, on AG-MAfr Mosman's Correspondence 628313-628439 and Congo Correspondence 717390-71800325.

48 "*L'Église face au colonialisme et impérialisme*" and "*L'impérialisme culturel de l'Église en Afrique*", *La Revue Nouvelle*, 15th June 1958 pp 562-584 and 15th July 1958, pp 25-45.

for the possibility of a cultural encounter. The book *Z'Église à l'heure de l'Afrique* appeared in 1961 as a kind of manifesto for his new task at the secretariat of the Congo Episcopal conference.⁴⁹ Mosmans describes the process of secularization in Africa. As Africa was liberated from a colonial régime in which the Church occupied a privileged position, the continent became more and more fascinated with non-Christian and anti-Christian ideologies. The Church is not a "kingdom of this world" but it must encourage access to new technology, while safeguarding genuine African tradition. The rôle of the Church was "to communicate the sacred and sanctify the profane".⁵⁰

Arriving in Congo on the eve of the country's independence crisis, Mosmans was well placed to advise Volker and his General Council on what steps to take. He correctly judged that a "catastrophic deterioration" of the situation was taking place. He also foresaw that large scale expulsions of Belgian missionaries were likely and that contingency plans should be drawn up. In 1960 he approved the plan to find placements in neighbouring Swahili-speaking countries, such as Tanganyika, for these missionaries.⁵¹ In December 1966, after the first murders had been committed, he wrote to Volker: "What troubles me most personally is the confusion of so many missionaries, made worse by poor health, in many regions where the material conditions of life are difficult, where medical provision is wanting and nervous tension reaches its limits."⁵²

Mosmans was enthralled by the Second Vatican Council. It came at precisely the right moment for the Church in the Congo. "It was", he wrote, "an incomparable enrichment".⁵³ The Congolese Church's post-independence pastoral plan was largely the work of Mosmans. In 1967 a Plenary Assembly of the Congolese Bishops was held in the light of the Vatican II teachings. The aim was to build an authentic "particular Church", with structures and central organs for "elaborating an incarnat-

49 *Série Église Vivante*, Casterman, Tournai.

50 Mosmans, *op.cit.*, p.163.

51 AGMAfr 628427, Mosmans to Cauwe 15th July 1960.

52 AGMAfr 71800374, Mosmans to Volker, 22nd December 1966.[^]

53 "*République démocratique du Congo*". *L'Aggiornamento de l'Église*, Lumen Vitae, vol. xxiii (1968) no. 3, p.527.

ed pastoral action". There were to be "lay pastors" and a new role for the "humble and fraternal" priest.⁵⁴

After handing over the secretariat to a Congolese priest and being obliged to leave Congo in 1972, Mosmans worked until 1977 for the Belgian Pontifical Mission Aid Sociétés. He died at Brussels aged 73 in 1983 after a lengthy illness. Guy Mosmans was probably the most important and influential Missionary of Africa outside Rome. Not only did he help the Church in Congo recover from the events of the mid-1960s, he was also instrumental in paving the way for the return of its missionary diaspora.

Volker's General Council

The 1957 Chapter gave Volker four assistants: from France, Ireland, Belgium and Canada, all younger than himself. Nearest in age to him



Members of the 1957 General Chapter.

were Jacques Lanfry and Richard Walsh, both of them 47. **Lanfry** was chosen as First Assistant. He was born near Rouen, but had been ordained in 1933 for the Diocese of Versailles.⁵⁵ He was given permission to apply to the White Fathers and entered the novitiate at Maison Carrée at the

⁵⁴ Ibid. pp.532-535.

⁵⁵ These notes are taken from his biography in PE 919, 2001/3, pp.164-169.



Generai Council of 1957-1967. Fr. Léo Volker (center) with his Assistants. From l. to r.: Frs. Aelred Cauwe, Richard Walsh, Jacques Lanfry and Georges-Albert Mondor.

end of the year. He spent his year of probation in Kabylia and, after taking the missionary oath in 1935, went to Tunisia to study Arabie and Islam. Lanfry was a strong personality, endowed with exceptional gifts, yet possessed of considerable charm in relationships. At the outbreak of World War II he was mobilized, but returned to Algeria after the fall of France in 1940, becoming superior at Warzen. He has been described as "a real White Father and, at the same time, a Chief". In 1942, after the Allied landings in North Africa, he was again conscripted and served as a chaplain in the Tunisian campaign. After the war, he returned to Kabylia, as director of the Centre for Berber Studies until 1947. Thereafter he was appointed Superior for North Africa and experienced the outbreak of the Algerian war in 1954. From June 1963 when Volker suffered a heart attack, until the Chapter of May 1967, Lanfry was virtually in charge of the Society because of the Superior General's ill health. Even after the 1967 Chapter he was to remain in Rome as the Society's Secretary for Islam and Consultor on Islam for the Secretariat of Non Christians (Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue).⁵⁶

⁵⁶ He returned to Algeria in 1976, but went back to France two years later, involved in académie work, chiefly the Berber and Kabyl dictionaries. He received the Légion of Honour from the French government in 1964. He died at Bry-sur-Marne on the Society's patronal feast, December 8th, 2000. The author received a visit from him in Uganda in 1968, and met him again at Toulouse in 1992.

Richard Walsh was the same age as Lanfry but, in character and temperament, the complete opposite. Indeed, on many points it was clear that they did not see eye to eye.⁵⁷ Walsh was jovial and easy-going, ready to bend the rules if necessary. Born at Kenmare in Kerry, Ireland, he finished secondary schooling at Bishop's Waltham, before going to Autreppe in Belgium for Philosophy. He made his novitiate at Maison Carrée in 1932, completed his studies at Carthage and was ordained there in 1937. He was appointed to Tabora Diocese in Tanganyika (Tanzania), but took a course at Southampton University first and spent some months at Heston in 1938-1939. Although war had broken out, he managed to get a passage to Mombasa and make his way to Tabora, where he was appointed to teach at St. Mary's Secondary School. He became headmaster in 1944 and at the same time Education Secretary for the Diocese.

In 1946 he took on a young teacher called Julius Nyerere, the future President of Tanzania. Walsh shared many ideas with Nyerere and encouraged him in his political career. In 1946 Walsh moved to Dar es Salaam, where he remained for a decade, having been appointed Education Secretary for the Tanganyika Bishops, representing the Catholic Missions at the government department of education. During this period he helped Nyerere get into Edinburgh University for studies in History and Economics. On his return he encouraged him to work full time for political independence.⁵⁸

Walsh was the first member of the British ("Anglo-Irish") Province to be elected to the General Council. Probably no other member of the Society had as much knowledge and experience of the British educational System, and he was regularly consulted on questions about further studies for confreres.⁵⁹ He was not afraid to recommend solutions regarded as unorthodox by the superiors. Archbishop Michael Louis Fitzgerald recalls his own case.

57 These notes are based on PE 475, Sept-Oct-Nov 1957, p.440; and PE 706, 1980/1, pp. 44-51. The author knew him in Rome 1962-1963, and in Dar es Salaam 1968-1979.

58 After Rome he became an assistant priest in the parish of Oyster Bay, Dar es Salaam, and then for ten years Catholic chaplain to Dar es Salaam University. He died in 1979 at the age of 69.

59 Walsh was awarded the MBE by the British Government.

Some time in May of 1965, I was called to see Fr Volker. I had at that time finished writing my thesis in theology and had deposited it, and was waiting for the final exam. He told me that the Council wanted to appoint me on the staff of what was still then called IPEA (now PI S AI). He asked me to reflect well, because this would determine the rest of my life. In other words, the appointment was not just imposed on me. I suppose I could have said "no", had there been reasons for doing so, but I was quite willing to accept this new orientation. There was a battle afterwards as to where I should study: Lanfry wanted me to go to IPEA which by this time had moved to Rome; Dick Walsh, who had wanted me to be appointed to Nigeria, suggested that I study elsewhere in order to bring not only new blood but also a new outlook to the Institute. Dick won, and it was decided that I would study in the U.K. It was left to me to choose the university I would attend. This perhaps illustrates the way the Superior General and his council made appointments.

60

The author's own case was similar.

I arrived in Rome in September 1962 having been appointed by my Provincial to study Spiritual Theology for four years. I was called to see Dick Walsh. "Forget Spiritual Theology" he said. "See what you can find in Rome in the field of African Studies and the bottom won't fall out of holy obedience." I ended up as a hospes in the newly founded Missiology Faculty of the Gregorian University. They recommended that I return to Oxford for Social Anthropology. Dick Walsh concurred and I was reappointed to Britain for studies in 1963.

Walsh's experience of nationalist politics in Africa was also unique among his confreres. Where office work was concerned, however, he had no sort of order or regular filing system. He often lost letters and documents and found them later in unexpected places. At times he was absent minded, and, on calling to see someone, could not remember why he was there. All of this made him either lovable or exasperating, depending upon the point of view.

60 Letter to the author July 8th 2011.

Aelred Cauwe (1916-1993) was aged 41 when elected Assistant to Volker. As a Flemish speaking Belgian, his presence on the General Council was no doubt congenial to him. However, his early years had been spent in Brazil whither his family had moved after the Great War.⁶¹ He learned his "mother tongue" as a teenager at secondary school after his family returned to Bruges. He studied Philosophy at Boechout in 1936 and made his novitiate and scholasticate at Heverlée during the Second World War, being ordained there in 1944. Cauwe was intellectually gifted, open-minded, artistic and imaginative. He was a very valuable addition to Volker's team and had been a brilliant teacher at Heverlée, where he was appointed in 1946. Sadly, his further studies were cut short because of chronic headaches. Afterwards, he taught at Marienthal and became superior of Thy-le-Château. In 1955-1956 he made a study trip in Africa that took him to the Congo and Burundi. He was back in Belgium giving retreats in Namur when he was called to the Chapter in 1957. His portfolio as Assistant included Germany, Belgium, Luxemburg, Netherlands, Switzerland, Congo, Rwanda and Burundi. He was placed in charge of Brothers' formation and was involved in Vatican II Committee work, especially the preparatory commission on the missions. The 1967 Chapter was a personal turning point for him and in 1968 he suffered a multiple thrombosis entailing brain damage, from which he never recovered. He died at Varsenare in 1993, aged 76.

At 37, **Georges-Albert Mondor** was the youngest of Volker's Assistants. He was Master of Novices at St. Martin in Canada, when called to Rome after his election. He arrived at the Chapter in the evening of 8th July.⁶² When he left office in 1967, he was appointed to Missionary Promotion in Canada and worked for a decade with the Pontifical Mission Aid Societies in Québec and Montréal.⁶³ He died in 2012 at Montréal aged 92.

61 Thèse notes are based on PE 850, 1994/6, pp. 194-196.

62 PE 474, July-August 1957, p. 375. At the âge of 91 Fr. Mondor was in résidence at Montréal.

63 Mondor was still alive at the time of writing this, and he kindly agreed to be interviewed! in February 2012. He died on October 27th 2012.

The Second Vatican Council ^{63b}



The four Bishops from Burundi at the Vatican Council II in Rome, in 1962. From l. to r.: Bishop Michel Ntuyahaga, of the diocesan clergy, (Bujumbura), Archbishop Antoine Grauls, M.Afr., (Gitega), Bishop Joseph Martin, M.Afr., (Bururi) and Bishop André Makarakiza, M.Afr. (Ngozi).

Volker's ten years as Superior General were dominated, and even transformed, by the great event taking place in the Vatican Basilica - the Ecumenical Council. Before its impressive opening on October 11th 1962, interest focussed on the Council's logistics and material preparation, the construction of the tribunes in St. Peter's and so forth, and the editor of *Petit Echo* informed his readers that "We should not expect spectacular or immediate results from the Council".⁶⁴ Volker, who continued Durrieu's practice of addressing a letter to the Society each month, saw the Council primarily as "a renewal of faith and morals".⁶⁵ At the close of the first session, *Petit Echo* noted that there had been a trend to-wards ecumenism, *aggiornamento* and a desire to reduce the power of the

Roman Curia.⁶⁶ Volker in his second letter of 1963 had already understood the importance of the Council for world mission and that "it was for the society an *aggiornamento*", a bringing up to date.⁶⁷

63b See the list of the White Fathers Bishops présents at the Vatican Council II, p. 76.

64 PE 527, June 1962, pp. 306-310; PE 530, October 1962, pp. 501-503.

65 PE 522, January 1962, pp. 6-10.

66 PE 534, February 1963, p. 69.

67 PE 534, February 1963, pp. 61-65. The author was présent in Rome for the Council's Ist session and up to the conclave following John XXIII's death in June 1963. He learned very little about Vatican II at Via Aurélia. Most of his information came from Abbot (later Bishop) B. C. Butler whom he visited at San Anselme

Defining our Identity, secular or religious?

From the outset, one of the main interests of missionary institutes in the Second Vatican Council centred on their place and future in the Church. This concern was triggered by all the uncertainties and anxieties afflicting missionary lands at this moment of decolonization and political independence. The first question they asked was: What was their juridical status? Cardinal Lavigerie's first perception for his missionaries was that of a society of secular priests living together, similar to the priests of the Missions Étrangères de Paris (MEP).⁶⁸ This simple vision was rendered more complex by two facts. One was that certain dispositions intended to regulate religious congregations with simple vows were applied to the Society by the Holy See.⁶⁹ The other was that the founder did, for a brief moment, consider turning his missionaries into religious and the brother auxiliaries into monks. In line with this vision, the oath or promise imposed on his missionary priests could be converted, in exceptional circumstances, into temporary and final vows of religion; while brothers would become farming monks on the analogy of the Trappist Order.⁷⁰ Of the three Jesuit novice masters he employed, Lavigerie, favoured François Terrasse, who was the least inclined to make the White Father novices into religious of the Jesuit or Ignatian mould. During the founder's lifetime the idea of a second novitiate was introduced, but without mention of the "Spiritual Exercises".

From a juridical point of view there is no doubt that the founder abandoned the idea of making his missionaries into religious. However, he wanted them to live, pray and work together in communities, as a safeguard against spiritual, moral and physical dangers. He did not ever get around to defining just what their vocation consisted in, from a spiritual or canonical point of view. During the superiorate of Bishop Durrieu, his Assistant, Joseph Gelot (1911 -2003), appeared to favour an interpretation along the Lines of French Religious Institutes.⁷¹ He later modi-

68 Cf. AGMAfr SOC II S 26: Gelot, J., *Les Etats de Perfection* 1957; AGMAfr Casier 377 (1), Durant, J., *Historical Memorandum on the Nature of the Society* 67/A/1.

69 *Directory of the Constitutions* 1914, p.27.

70 Durant op.cit., p.11, and Durant J. *Historical Memorandum on the Brothers of Our Society*, 67/A/3.

71 Cf. Communication from GA.Mondor February 23rd 2012.

fied this opinion, believing that, even if Missionaries of Africa do not take formal vows, they are "vowed to the apostolic state". The oath is a "religious obligation and a consecration to God".⁷²

Dominique Nothomb (1924-2008), a Belgian who had worked for more than twenty years in Rwanda, and whose writings were already well known, was altogether more forthright. He told the 1967 Chapter in no uncertain terms that he favoured the opinion that the Missionaries of Africa should be religious.⁷³ The Society was not, he declared, some kind of super Fidei Donum organization, sending individual secular priests to the foreign missions. On the contrary, it was a spiritual family, living an apostolic ideal in community. Its members were not like secular priests, but they were a kind of bridge between the secular and the religious in the missionary world. White Fathers were, he said, "Artisans of Unity".

The Chapter appointed an inter-session commission to study the question in detail and on October 27th 1967, Nothomb presented its report to the Chapter's second session.⁷⁴ The previous Chapter of 1957, it claimed, followed the theology of Pius XII and strongly underlined the Society's assimilation to religious. The word "consecration" used by Vatican II applied to the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Orders and to Religious Profession. Our missionary consecration is therefore not a secular contract but is somehow like a sacramental consecration. Whether or not we like to admit it, we have to ask if we are really talking about a religious profession. Are we "juridically" religious or simply "theologically" religious? In the documents of Vatican II religious consecration is understood as a "self-oblation", the union of an individual with God by means of the three evangelical counsels. The commission found that missionary consecration was a different step from religious self-oblation. It is a response to God's call that is ordered towards the work of the Gospel. Missionaries of Africa are not "mini-religious", nor are they religious who undertake missionary work. They are "nothing but Apostles", deriving their identity from the work of the apostolate.

72 Gelot, *op.cit.*, pp.81-87.

73 AGMAfr Casier 379/5, Minutes of 1st Session, Vol. 1, pp.386-389.

74 AGMAfr Ibid., Minutes of Second Session, pp.41-53.

In this definition, the influence of the Second Vatican Council was crucial. Shortly before the Council's second session in 1963, Volker and a group of Superiors G nerai of missionary societies had made a strongly worded remonstrance to the Prefect of Propaganda Fide, Cardinal Gregory-Peter Agagianian.⁷⁵ In it, the following passage is to be found:

i) We wish to emphasize most strongly our desire to remain as societies of secular priests living in community. There exist tendencies to treat our societies as if they were religious and to bind us by rules suitable for religious. We have no sympathy with these tendencies and wish to put on record that they find no favour in our societies. ii) When the time comes to revise our Constitutions in the light of Vatican Council II and of the new Code of Canon Law we should ensure that the canons governing the secular clergy are our norms and not those relating to religious.

Three years later, in 1966, when the Council had finished its work, Volker warned against starting a discussion on the identity of the Society from the purely juridical standpoint of whether White Fathers are, or are not, religious. The 1967 Chapter, he said, should begin with the Gospel and the evangelical counsels.⁷⁶ The Vatican Council's Decree *Perfectae Caritatis* was promulgated in October 1965, at the Council's final session, and its influence was clearly felt in the discussions that took place at the 1967 Chapter.

Ten years earlier, in 1957, Joseph Gelot had discussed the canonical status of "societies of common life without vows".⁷⁷ Following the 1917 Code of Canon Law and the apostolic constitution *Provida Mater* of February 2nd 1947, he concluded that there were three canonical "states of perfection": 1) "public": religious with vows; (2) "semi-public": societies without vows and (3) "recognized": secular institutes. He suggested that, the Missionaries of Africa were definitely not a secular institute, and that, while they belonged technically to the semi-public

75 AGMAfr 567338 27th September 1963; AGMAfr 567339 Conclusions of meeting held on September 25th-26th 1963.

76 PE 566, March 1966, pp. 108-110.

77 AGMAfr SOC II S 26, po.1. Gelot, J., *Les  tats de Perfection*, April 29» 1957.

state, they "veered towards the religious clergy" and not towards the secular clergy. They were in fact priests and brothers who "imitated the life-style of religious".⁷⁸ Although vows were suppressed by Cardinal Lavignerie, the missionary oath had the same effect as vows and was even stricter. Ordained White Fathers were secular priests who "imitated the vows of religion and their practical consequences".⁷⁹



Gelot's analysis was overtaken by the discussions and documents of Vatican II. Not only did the term "religious"

acquire a spiritual and theological, rather than juridical, resonance, but the concept of "apostolic life communities" was developed. These were societies without vows whose life was penetrated by their apostolic action. This was the gist of an intervention at the 1967 Chapter by Xavier Seumois (1915-1994), who had inside experience of the workings and debates of the Council, and who had helped to *author Ad Gentes Divinitus*.⁸⁰ Our missionary consecration, he told the Chapter, derived from our "ecclesial life-style" of apostolic charity.

The last word belongs, perhaps, to Jan Delteijk (1911-2002). In a commentary he wrote in 1967, on a typescript completed in December 1966, he pointed out that Missionaries of Africa are committed to the apostolic state and that their twin goals of procuring God's glory and Personal sanctification are achieved in and through the apostolic life.⁸¹ In apostolic life communities apostolic action takes on the nature of religious life and is animated by a religious spirit. Vows are not necessary for the practice of the evangelical counsels in this, or any other state.

78 Ibid., 2.

79 Ibid., 48.

80 AGMAfr Casier 379/5, Inter-Session Vol. 1, p.56, Seumois, Présentation to 2nd Session, October 24th 1967.

81 AGMAfr SOC II S 23: Delteijk, *La Spiritualité des Pères Blancs*, Rome 1967, p.29.

Delteijk agreed with Gelot that the adoption by the Society of an Ignatian Spirituality was a logical development of Cardinal Lavignerie's thinking.⁸² The 1957 Chapter declared that Ignatian Spirituality was the official spirituality of the Society: "in accordance with the expressed will of the founder... and in conformity with the Constitutions and the spirit of the Missionaries of Africa"; and the 1967 Chapter agreed that the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius were the "ordinary and traditional means" of fulfilling our spiritual and missionary vocation, "without infringing in any way on the personal liberty of the individual".⁸³ This caution was no doubt prompted by a failed minority motion at the 1967 Chapter proposing that the reference to Ignatian Spirituality in the Constitutions should be dropped.⁸⁴ This is, in fact, what eventually happened. In the present Constitutions of the Society (2006) there is no mention of Ignatian Spirituality or of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, in the sections on our vocation, spiritual year or ongoing formation.

In this way, the hotly debated issue of the spirituality and juridical status of the Society was laid to rest in the conjunction of an evolution, brought about by the Second Vatican Council, with the spirit of renewal that pervaded the 1967 Chapter and its aftermath.

82 Delteijk, *Ibid.*, p. 13.

83 1957 *Constitutions*, Article IV; 1967 *Capitular Documents*, n° 636.

84 1967 Minutes of 1⁵¹ Session, AGMAfr Casier 379/5, vol. 1, p.79. Aelred Cauwe wanted a motion in the opposite sensé.

Volker at the Council



Pope Jean XXIII with Fr. Léo Volker at the opening of Vatican Council II.

In the final session of the Council there were 311 bishops from Africa, sixty of them black Africans. Forty-two of the bishops were Missionaries of Africa.⁸⁵ Volker had himself become a Council Father, with deliberative vote, appointed by John XXIII in January 1963.⁸⁶ Pierre Duprey (1923-2007) was already attached to the newly created Secretariat of Christian Unity, with Jozef Blomjous a member of the Commission on the Laity. The importance of ecumenism for Africa was emphasized by the All-Africa Conference of Churches, which had been founded at Kampala in 1963.⁸⁷ The Council Fathers from Africa were a relatively small group, but, with their own secretariat organized by Blomjous and Zoa, were able to make a significant contribution to debates. Volker's first concern in the second session was to introduce an amendment on the missionary vocation, in the debate on the Dogmatic

⁸⁵ There were 44 M. Afr. members of the Council at the 2nd Session, one of them being Volker himself. (Cf list pp 76-77)

⁸⁶ Superiors G nerai of congr gations with more than 1,000 members were similarly appointed. There were 148. PE 535, March 1963, p. 124.

⁸⁷ Its secr tariat in the 1960s was situated at Mindolo in Zambia.

Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*. His maiden speech at the Council was delivered on behalf of six missionary societies and twenty bishops.⁸⁸ He wanted to add the category of "missionary sanctity" to the categories of lay, religious and priestly holiness already mentioned in the draft. In this, he ultimately failed, but he expounded his ideas to the Society in a series of letters.⁸⁹ Volker gave the final word on this subject, to Edward Schillebeeckx, whose conference on co-operation (and decentralization) in the Church he published in *Petit Echo* with an introduction of his own. According to Volker, Schillebeeckx's conference showed how missionary institutes relate to the Church.⁹⁰

For Volker, as for other missionaries, the highlight of the Council was the debate on the Church's missionary activity which took place in the third session. In his report to the Society, he quoted the intervention of Bishop Xavier Geeraerts (1894-1971), the Belgian Vicar Apostolic of Bukavu, on what became known as the "Missio Dei", the origin of the Church's mission in God.⁹¹ This became a locus classicus in the missionary decree *Ad Gentes Divinitus*.⁹² Volker was an ardent advocate for a special decree on the missionary work of the Church, and he rallied influential Council members, especially other Superiors General of missionary institutes, to the cause. These efforts took the form of a booklet entitled: *Commentary on the Schéma of Proposals concerning the Missionary Activity of the Church*. It was published in August 1964 and a copy given to every Council member.⁹³ When the final text of the decree was accepted and promulgated by the Council in its final session, Volker recommended it enthusiastically to the Society in his January 1966 letter.⁹⁴ In a letter composed on the final day of the Council, he said of the text that it was "one of the most substantial and elaborate

88 Fr. Léo Volker, p.24.

89 PE 543, December, 1963, pp. 565-568; PE 544, January, 1964, pp. 5-8; PE 545, February, 1964, pp. 61-63.

90 PE 560, July-August, 1964, p. 351; PE 561, Sept-Oct. 1965, pp.398-402. Schillebeeckx did not actually mention "missionary institutes" as such, but spoke of "apostolic charisms".

91 PE 553, December 1964, pp.494-498.

92 Cf. *Ad Gentes*, 2.

93 Fr. Léo Volker, p.24.

94 PE 565, February 1966, pp. 58-59.

texts of the Council". It now fell to the Society to help bring the Council's message to the world.⁹⁵ A by-product of Volker's collaboration with other missionary superiors General was the foundation of the documentation service SEDOS (Servizio Documentazione e Studi) in 1964. Volker was the catalyst in this group and presided over its meetings. He was elected its first president, by the co-founders.⁹⁶

Sufferings and Trials

At the close of the missionary debate everyone was very tired. Volker had suffered a first heart attack in April 1963. Now, in November 1964 he had a check-up lasting fifteen days. He was given the all-clear, but his health had suffered from his exertions at the Council, and there were more heart problems in early 1965.

Simultaneously, with the pressures entailed by the Council came the further burden of casualties suffered in the anti-colonial wars. The Algerian War broke out in 1954 and ended in complete independence for Algeria in 1962. It was an ugly three-cornered conflict between Nationalists (FLN), Colonists and the French Government, and involved huge loss of life. The Missionaries of Africa who were kidnapped or murdered by the FLN guerrillas or other rebel groups were a tiny number, compared to the total, but their loss was a shock for the Society, so long established in the country and so dedicated to the peaceful welfare of indigenous Muslims. The first to die was Jean Tabart (1915-1956) in August 1956 and the last two were Paul Py (1901-1962) and Bernard Chasine (1904-1962) shortly before final independence. Between these dates there were three more murders (or abductions). Volker was Superior General at the time of the last two deaths and he wrote a circular, calling on White Fathers to identify with their sacrifice.⁹⁷

Before the ending of the Algerian War, the Congo crisis had begun in 1960 with political independence conceded by Belgium, ending with the taking of power by Joseph Mobutu in 1965. The first White Father to be killed was Renaat de Vos (1912-1962) in Bukavu in February 1961 at the

95 PE 564, January 1966, pp. 6-9.

96 Fr. Léo Volker, p.25.

97 PE 532, December, 1962, pp. 610-614.

hands of Lumumba partisans. Volker was visiting Rwanda and Burundi when he received the news. He was able to break his journey and visit the scene of the tragedy in April. Twenty Spiritans were massacred at Kongolo in January 1962 and Volker feared that worse was to come for the Missionaries of Africa. Between August and December 1964 another eleven Belgian White Fathers were massacred at Kalemie, Aba (Mahagi) and Bunia at the hands of rebel militias, chiefly the so-called Simbas. These tragic events led to the withdrawal of nearly all missionaries from Kasongo, Mahagi, Bunia and part of Baudouinville. Some had been tortured and many more were traumatized.⁹⁸ To lose twelve confrères in this way was a stunning loss. Even so, the losses of other missionary societies were greater. The Crozier Fathers, for example, lost twenty-four missionaries in Equator Province in 1964-1965. Volker realized that these tragedies were a turning point for the Society and for the Church's mission in Africa. Already in 1961, a propos the dangers confronting Africa, he had exclaimed in reply to Lanfry's New Year good wishes: "The past is gone. We must re-plan our whole action in humility. This is now the acceptable time, the crucial moment." " On the whole, Volker believed that the changes sweeping across Africa were good for the Church. An especial consolation for him occurred as a by-product of Tunisian independence and the secularization of Carthage Cathedral. This was the transfer of the remains of Cardinal Lavignerie to a new resting place in the crypt of the Generalate in Rome. Their re-interment took place in a solemn ceremony on July 14th 1964.¹⁰⁰ This was an event, therefore, that preceded the great missionary debate in the aula, and the canonization of the Uganda Martyrs. Taken together with the sacrifice of eleven confrères in the Congo, 1964 was the most memorable year of Volker's superiorate.

A confidential memorandum made to the Bishops of the Congo in 1964 assessed the relations between missionaries and Congolese diocesan priests.¹⁰¹ Although they were critical of the hierarchy, the Congolese clergy were said to be admirable when the crisis began. There

98 PE 555, February 1965, pp. 57-59. Some had witnessed the brutal murder of their confrères.

99 PE 512, February 1961.

100 PE 551, Sept-Oct 1964, pp. 494-498.

101 AGMAfr 717390.

was, however, little or no dialogue with the bishops and cases of indiscipline occurred which were due to priests going their own way in following African human values and allegiances. Celibacy, however, was for the most part as exemplary as anywhere in the world. Relations between diocesan priests and missionaries were at their best, as a result of the latter's acquiescence in the Congolese priests' *désire* that they should stay on in the Congo throughout the crisis.

Pierre Mulele, a national deputy and former secretary general of the African Solidarity Party (ASP), was an extremist who had been an atheist since childhood.¹⁰² Obligated to leave an order of teaching brothers, he joined the army and organized a mutiny. Under threat of arrest, he became a *déserteur* and reached Léopoldville (Kinshasa) where he became a Communist and founded the ASP, serving in Patrice Lumumba's cabinet. He fell out with Lumumba whom he thought too pro-Belgian and encouraged Antoine Gizenga's failed Communist *rébellion* of 1961-1962. He travelled to Eastern Europe and China where he learned how to organize a guerrilla force, with the aim of installing a Communist régime in the Congo. Returning to Africa, he organized youth training camps and became a messianic figure for petty chiefs in the ethnic groups of three régions.

In 1964 he created a secret organization, popularly known as the "Simba *rébellion*" which conducted a scorched earth policy and attacked all foreigners. Myths about Mulele's own invulnerability abounded and the Simbas generally believed that they were immune to bullets. Mulele had several mobile headquarters in different parts of the country which exercised minimal control over the bands of tribesmen who hailed him as leader and who took his name. These largely came from Kivu and Eastern Provinces where the Missionaries of Africa worked. They also managed to immobilize the National Army and to wrest control of several towns. The Government was virtually powerless. Large numbers of hostages were taken and many were executed with *extrême* brutality. The overall aim, in so far as there was any co-ordination, was to create a *tabula rasa*. About half the country was affected.

102 AGMAfr 717378, "The Truth about the Mulele Maquis", by Olivier Kamitatu Etsu, Minister of Planning and Industrial Development, Léopoldville January 29* 1964.

Out of 44 dioceses in the Congo, six were seriously affected by the rébellion and twenty were completely submerged.¹⁰³ Organized religious activities were halted and hundreds of missionaries were displaced or exiled. At the beginning of 1965, the lack of personnel and resources made restoration impossible. The rébellion was in many ways a catalyst for change in the Church. Many religious communities were radically shaken, but the excesses of the rébellion led to an examination of conscience and a general return to the Church. The masses remained in a state of penury and wretchedness, but the morale of the missionaries was, on the whole, strengthened by the ordeal.¹⁰⁴

Volker reacted to the tragic events as they occurred, usually in a monthly letter, appearing in both French and English in the *Petit Echo*. Apart from communicating the decisions of the 1957 Chapter, Volker wrote no *général* circulars on particular subjects.¹⁰⁵ His leadership at the time of crisis in 1964-1965 was effectively exercised through spiritual conferences which he delivered to missionaries at the Long Retreat.¹⁰⁶

The following is the summary of one such conference from his personal notebook.¹⁰⁷ Attitude to Events in Africa: we never allow hatred to penetrate our hearts even when confronted by the most heart-rending experiences. We must always try to understand the struggle that young nations are going through. They need to safeguard their own independence. We must pray, but we can be sad in prayer. We share in the sadness and anguish of those who suffer and those who cause the suffering. Christians bring a message of love and peace, yet they are thought to be the cause of trouble and division. That is the eternal paradox and Jésus foretold it. We know his predictions theoretically. Now we are living them. "They do these things because they do not know me or the Father". The grain of wheat must first die. That is the mysterious law of

103 AGMAfr 71800372, *L'Église au Congo*, 1966.

104 AGMAfr 71800331/71800332, Cauwe to Mosmans, 9* December 1964.

105 Collections of his already published letters and speeches appeared in two volumes (1&3). The Chapter circulars appeared as Volume 2, and were issued together with the revised Constitutions of 1957. (Rome 1958.)

106 Cf. AGMAfr SOC II S, Manuscript and typescript notebook, *Conférences for Long Retreat*.

107 Volker, *Ibid*.

Christian fecundity. Parents and families must find consolation in this. We left them out of love for our Saviour and (he has promised that) life and happiness are the outcome of suffering and death.

Volker makes two further points. We are tempted to flinch in front of the grave obstacles to our apostolate. Perseverance is nothing less than a share in God's dynamism. His strength passes into us. Mary persevered under the cross. The spiritual life means seeing God in everything and everyone, and this ought to be the subject for our particular examen.

Constitutions and Directory

The 1957 Chapter bequeathed to Volker and his team the thankless task of continuing to update the Directory of the Constitutions.¹⁰⁸ Although he accepted the undertaking and often referred to the Directory in his circulars to the Society, Volker began to entertain doubts about the wisdom of producing another edition. The current text had, after ail, only been created five years previously, in 1952. In his letter of November 1961, he referred to the many requests he had received from missionaries to replace the 1952 Directory. However, he said, he wanted to produce a definitive text that did not have to be continually corrected and augmented. What was needed was an historical commentary on the Constitutions, which would encapsulate their spirit, and not the multiplication of detailed regulations. It should hold a balance between the spirit and the letter of the law. Joseph Gelot and Alphonse Goor were already at work on such a text, and they were being helped by the history research team that had been set up by Durrieu. This consisted of Xavier de Montclos



¹⁰⁸ The Constitutions also had to be brought up to date with the décisions of the 1957 Chapter.

(1924-1970*), François Renault (1926-1996) and Jacques Durant (1925-2009). The first objective of this team was to study every aspect of the life and thought of Cardinal Lavigerie, to submit doctoral theses to the University of Paris (Sorbonne) and to produce academie publications. Volker now harnessed their expertise to produce the historical commentary he desired.¹⁰⁹ Following the 1957 Chapter, Joseph Gelot (1911-2003) was asked to update the Constitutions in the light of the Chapter's decisions and to produce yet another updated Directory of the Constitutions. Alphonse Goor (1929-1998) was deputed to assist him.¹¹⁰ The two approached the task in a spirit similar to that of the 1952 edition. It was seen as a matter of identifying and including all the rules and directives of the General Council and former Chapters which had not yet appeared in the Directory and which had not been cancelled, in fact any and every item that was a spiritual or juridical commentary on the Society's existing Constitutions. It was a quantitative, rather than a qualitative, update.¹¹¹ The process was to be the result of a historical enquiry into the Society's sources and the end-product was an enormous file, containing more than five thousand entries.

In the meantime, the Second Vatican Council began its sessions which Volker attended as a Council Father. By the middle of 1963, after the Council's first session, it became clear to him that aggiornamento meant something altogether more radical than he had previously envisaged and he decided not to publish the text which Gelot and Goor were preparing.¹¹² His first move was to expand the team by appointing Pierre Grillou (1929-2011), Octave Juvent (1916-2012). Christopher O'Doherty (1924-2004) and Paul Maurel (1911-2001) to its ranks. For two years they were to study the text already produced and then submit a re-edited version to the General Council who would decide what to do with it.¹¹³ More than a hundred confreres were consulted.

109 PE 520, November 1961, pp. 485-487; PE 523, February 1962, pp. 69-72.

110 Goor lived outside the Society for the last twenty-eight years of his life, but there was no formalized departure.

111 Donders Sjef, communications of June 17» 2003 and February 20» 2012.

112 PE 539, July 1963, p. 337.

113 PE 549, 1964, p. 291.

From July 16th to August 18th 1965 a "Directory Commission" that had been expanded even further met at Marienthal. New members were Franz Friih (1919-), Sjeff Donders (1929-2013), Andréas Edele (1934-), Giuseppe Campanale (1922-1996) and Robert Gay (1927-).¹¹⁴ The material before them was mainly the work of the indefatigable Joseph Gelot and took the form of five thousand entries.¹¹⁵ The commission completed a month of intense work which was seen as basically a preparation for the 1967 Chapter. The aim was not to produce another directory, but rather a compendium of legal provisions in force. The work was a technical one of examining the existing drafts and deciding on the quality and arrangement of the contents.¹¹⁶ There were three possible outcomes for every item: those to be rejected, those to be kept and those to be placed in an annexe, pending further decision. An orientation vote and a definitive vote were to be taken on each item. More than 1,500 votes were taken in 46 sessions.

Every aspect of missionary life and spirituality was examined. Questions were asked about Ignatian Spirituality. Was it really compatible with the life which Lavigerie wanted for his missionaries and with the real message of the Gospel?¹¹⁷ Did the Letter on Obedience contain the whole theory of St. Ignatius?¹¹⁸ Many of the disciplinary directives were superfluous, obsolete or too particular: how to write the annual letters required by the rule, how fast a car was to be driven, how often rooms were to be swept, the menu for daily meals etc.?¹¹⁹ As Donders pointed out, there was a basic ambiguity in the texts under examination. Many, if not most, of the directives belonged to a pre-conciliar Church and even to a 19th century model of Church and papacy. It was impossible to turn them into a post-conciliar document. There were too many rules, too much distrust of subordinates, even a "hyper-centralization" and the desire to decide matters in advance.¹²⁰ There was also a call for

114 Sjeff Donders, *Ibid.*, AGMAfr 561036, 561106.

115 PE 561, Sept-Oct 1965, pp.398-402.

116 AGMAfr 563003, Directory Draft.

117 AGMAfr 561106, 95.

118 *Ibid.*, 330, art.229.

119 Donders, *Ibid.*; AGMAfr 561106, 104, 215, 333.

120 AGMAfr 561106, 215-216.

the 1957 Chapter's views on poverty and its idea of "nue-propiété" or "bare ownership" to be reviewed.¹²¹ In the autumn of 1965 Gelot delivered the weighty report of the Marienthal meeting to the Superior General and was given another appointment - that of Director of IPEA (now PISAI) in Rome.¹²²

At the same moment in 1965 the Second Vatican Council produced its decree on the Renewal of Religious Life, *Perfectae Caritatis*. Although the concept of "Institutes of Apostolic Life" was not yet fully developed, it was recognized that the Council was using the term "religious" in a broad sense. *Perfectae Caritatis* called for a renewal that was not merely a return to the sources, but an attempt to be in harmony with the changed conditions of our time.¹²³ In *Ecclesiae Sanctae II* of the following year, the norms for carrying out this renewal were spelt out. They entailed the complete revision of the institute's constitutions and other documents.¹²⁴ The rules were not to be multiplied unduly nor were they to be excessively juridical. Anything that was purely transitory or of merely local application was to be discarded. Volker summed it up in his 1967 New Year Address by saying that what was needed was "a new mode of being and thinking", not just another book of rules.¹²⁵ The Général Council decided not to submit the Directory Draft to the 1967 Chapter.

Although Gelot's new Directory was still-born, the discussions that surrounded the project played an important part in the preparation of the Renewal Chapter. Members of the Directory Commission played a crucial role at the Chapter in the Commission of Definitors and the Central Commission. In many ways the Marienthal meeting of 1965 was a rehearsal for the General Chapter of 1967.

In 1962 Volker introduced an innovation which has become an enduring structure of the Society of Missionaries of Africa. He convened a meeting of some forty major superiors (Provincials and Regionals).

121 AGMAfr 561106, 329: art. 211.

122 Then housed at Via Trenta Aprile.

123 *Perfectae Caritatis*, 2-4.

124 *Ecclesiae Sanctae II*, 12-14.

125 PE 575, February 1967, 65-68.

Now called the "Plenary Assembly", such a meeting regularly takes place today in the General Council's mid-term. The purpose of this meeting was broadly to enable the General Council to take its decisions with a greater awareness of what was happening in the provinces and regions.¹²⁶ Although, because of Volker's ill health and the demands of the Vatican Council, this meeting did not come up to his full expectations, it gave a broad support to his plans for the Directory.

In the end, the whole question was taken out of the hands of the General Council. *Ecclesiae Sanctae*, the Norms for Implementing the Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity, appeared in August 1966 and required every Missionary Institute to carry out an aggiornamento of its methods of evangelization and way of life.¹²⁷ To quote Volker again, it was about "a new mode of being and thinking"; thus ended the lengthy saga of the new Directory.¹²⁸

Volker in Africa, the African Seminaries, Lay Elites

After his election, Volker lost no time in visiting the regions of Africa that were less familiar to him. His visit to North Africa in 1958, at the height of the Algerian War, was much appreciated by a mission that had suffered.¹²⁹ From January to April of the following year, he set out for francophone West Africa, visiting Sénégal, Upper Volta, Mali, Guinea and Northern Ghana.¹³⁰ As the former rector of an African major seminary, he showed a particular interest in the eleven major seminaries that were in the hands of the Missionaries of Africa, and he made the Africanization of their staffs a priority, insisting on the Ordinaries releasing African priests for the purpose.¹³¹ In 1966, however, he agreed to take a further responsibility for the Senior Seminary of Adigrat in Ethiopia, which he made a point of visiting personally.¹³²

126 Fr. Léo Volker, p. 15; PE 523, February 1962, pp. 69-72; PE 531, November 1962, pp. 549-533; PE 580, July 1967, p. 332 (Decennial Report).

127 *Ecclesiae Sanctae*, 12; PE 575, February 1967, pp. 65-68.

128 A fuller account is given in Working Paper 4.

129 PE 479, March-April 1958, pp. 115-128.

130 PE 488, 1959, pp.111-114; PE 489, March, 1959, pp. 203-213; PE 490, April 1959, pp. 291-303.

131 Fr. Léo Volker, p.22. The figure of 11 major seminaries includes Adigrat, Ethiopia.

132 *Ibid.*, p.15; PE 572, November 1966, pp. 438-439.



The West African Centre for Economic and Social Studies (CESAO) (left) was set up at Bobo Dioulasso in Upper Volta in 1961. Two other formation Centers for lay African élites were opened during these years: the Nyegezi Social Training Centre in Tanzania (1961) (right) and a similar one in Bukavu (1963).

Volker did not neglect the formation of lay African élites and the création of social training centres had been a préoccupation of the 1957 Chapter. The West African Centre for Economic and Social Studies (CESAO) was set up at Bobo Dioulasso in Upper Volta in 1961, the same year that saw the foundation of the Nyegezi Social Training Centre in Tanganyika. In 1963, a similar centre was founded in Bukavu. By the end of 1967, the three centres had trained a total of 477 individuals.¹³³ Volker also agreed to provide a White Father for the Swahili service of Vatican Radio. This was a Dutchman, Piet van Pelt (1917-1998), who started in 1962.¹³⁴ Unfortunately, the service was discontinued in 1966 because of a defective "beaming" that could not be improved.¹³⁵

133 PE 579, June 1967, Decennial Report, p. 328.

134 PE 522, January 1992, p.11.

135 PE 566, March 1966, p. 112. Van Pelt returned to Tanzania and became Director of the Kipalapala Language and Pastoral Centre.

character of much of the information which CIPA offered. It was also competing with the *Revue du Clergé Africain* (RCA) which began to appear in 1946 at Mayidi in Congo, and - in its final years - with the English language *African Ecclesiastical (Ecclesial) Review* (AFER) which was launched in 1959 at Katigondo in Uganda. In its favour, it could be said that CIPA was making theological material more widely accessible to missionaries in the field and also providing information that was more readily available in Europe than in Africa.

CIPA was active from 1953 until 1966. During these thirteen years it produced up to six bulletins annually. The materials it published were documents of the magisterium, articles taken from theological journals (mainly *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* - NRT), and papers presented to various congresses and sessions. There was also some "home grown" material by confreres on specialist subjects which were more directly relevant to Africa. In the early years CIPA published some of the conferences delivered by staff and students of formation houses on the annual Cardinal's Day (November 26th). This was fairly "light weight" spirituality and did not owe much - if anything - to the Lavignerie studies of the history research team inaugurated by Durrieu. A summary of the team's findings, by Jacques Durant (1925-2009), did however appear in the final CIPA bulletin of 1957.

Among the Congresses on which CIPA reported were the Assisi Congress on Pastoral Liturgy in 1956, the Second World Congress on the Laity in 1957, the Eichstätt Catechetical Congress of 1960 and study sessions at Lille (France) and Dorking (Great Britain) in 1960, as well as the conferences organized by the Society at Mours in 1952, 1954 and 1961. The most immediately relevant were meetings held at the Butare Institute (1960) and Nyakibanda Seminary (1962) in Rwanda. These were due to the initiative of Xavier Seumoï (1915-1994).

CIPA, the White Fathers and - indeed - the missionary world owe a great deal to Seumoï.¹⁴¹ Having already served as Rector of Nyakibanda Seminary (1948-1952) and as General Secretary of the Society in Rome (1952-1959), Seumoï returned to Rwanda to found the Butare

141 Cf. Biographical notice in PE n° 858, 1995/2, pp. 93-96.

Institute, as a catechetical and pastoral centre for Rwanda and Burundi, affiliated to Lumen Vitae. From 1960 to 1962 he also taught at the Gregorian University in Rome and at Lumen Vitae in Brussels. When the Second Vatican Council opened, he served as a peritus and worked as a consultor for the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (Sacrosanctum Concilium) and the Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity (Ad Gentes Divinitus). After the council he was a member of the Liturgical Consilium of the Congregation for Rites from 1969-1971. Seumois was one of the authors of the restored catechumenal liturgy and most of the articles he wrote for CIPA were on this subject.

CIPA had rather little to say explicitly about Vatican II while the Council was in session, but Seumois was its privileged conciliar correspondent for pastoral liturgy and the catechumenate. After the Council closed, CIPA helpfully published an entire number (n° 1 of 1966) on the text of *Ad Gentes* and its history, written in English by Yves Tourigny (1914-2004).

Besides publishing the texts of several papal encyclicals and addresses, a great deal of space was devoted by CIPA to the social teaching of African episcopates (in 1955, 1956, 1962 and 1963). This was a useful insight into the African local magisterium from all over the continent. The crucial influence of certain bishops was noticeable: Jozef Blomjous (Mwanza) in statements from Tanganyika about social justice, development and the role of the laity; Denis Hurley (Durban) in many powerful statements from South Africa on the question of racial discrimination; and Marcel Lefebvre (Dakar) speaking for Francophone bishops in West and Central Africa. In the late 1950s the bishops were concerned about the dangers of Communism and the ambiguities of socialist ideologies. These concerns gave place to anxiety about the violence in Kenya, Algeria and Congo and to the need to prepare people for political independence.

True to Durrieu's interest in socio-religious research, CIPA's very first issue dealt with the subject, and later, in 1956, it published Joseph Mazé's (1883-1959) response to the international questionnaire on marriage customs in Catholic missions. Among other White Father experts whose work appeared in CIPA's pages, were: Joseph Cuoq (1917-1986)

for Islam, Jean-Marie Porrot (1905-1980) for mission history; Pierre Duprey (1923-2007) for ecumenism; Bernard Mangematin (1924-2012) for Christian initiation; Roland Vezeau (1914-2006) for Socialism; Dominique Nothomb (1924-2008) for ecumenism. An interesting subject to which several White Father authors contributed was the "*Dialogue of Salvatori*" inspired by Vatican II and published in 1965.

In 1961 CIPA published what was virtually an entire book on Marriage and related subjects by various authors. Among the latter were theological heavy-weights such as Bernard Haring, Jean Daniélou, Marc Oraison and Fulton J. Sheen. Other celebrities who were given space by CIPA included Louis-Paul Aujoulat (politician and missionary doctor, founder of the lay missionary movement Ad Lucem), Joseph Masson S. J. (Secretary of the Louvain missiological weeks and the one who introduced "inculturation" as a theological term) and Jean-Yves Calvez S.J. (a specialist on Communism and Socialism).

Although it made rather few concessions to the "bush missionary", CIPA publications reflected many of the ideas being aired in the Church before, during and immediately after the Second Vatican Council. The 1957 Chapter wanted CIPA to continue. This it did until 1966, but Volker was reluctant to appoint more staff to the Generalate for this work, and an expanded Petit Echo took care of some of its material. Volker wanted it to appear in English. The question of what to do with CIPA was left to the Chapter of 1967, which did not, in fact, continue the project.¹⁴²

The Catholic Press in Africa

White Fathers were involved in the creation of a Catholic press in many parts of Africa. Usually, this was on a strictly local level. One publication that enjoyed a much wider readership and which had a considerable impact on opinion and events was *Afrique Nouvelle*. This newspaper was an outstanding example of how the Missionaries of Africa promoted political independence through the press. After a brief experience as General Secretary of the Society and his highly successful war time project in Algiers, the Vatican Information Service, Robert Rummelhardt

142 Decennial Report, loc. cit., pp. 318, 338-339.

(1908-1974), a French Missionary of Africa from Alsace, went to Dakar (Sénégal) in the late 1940s to help Maurice Paternot (1895-1965) start the week-ly Catholic West African newspaper *Afrique Nouvelle*. Rummelhardt was a gifted organizer and journalist, a fearless fighter on behalf of the causes in which he believed.¹⁴³



Robert Rummelhardt.

In March 1951 there was a celebrated court case against the two missionaries, ending in a fine imposed by the local

magistrate. *Afrique Nouvelle* had published an objective article by Maurice Voisin criticizing the Police for illegal activities and the newspaper was accused of defamation by the French Public Prosecutor. Paternot and Rummelhardt were hauled before a tribunal correctionnel. This had far-reaching consequences when the case was mentioned in the French Assembly and the Minister for Colonies, François Mitterand, came under fire from the delegates. *Afrique Nouvelle* was morally vindicated and it was clear that the Missionaries of Africa were not in the pockets of the colonial government, but firmly on the side of oppressed Africans. Protests were also made in other French colonies and the salary of the Governor of French West Africa was reduced because of the affair.

Official Church circles were not, however, "on the side of the angels". Three years later in 1954 the Vicar Apostolic of Dakar, who was also Apostolic Delegate to French West Africa, publicly rebuked Rummelhardt and called for his dismissal. The prelate in this case was the Spiritan Missionary and future schismatic, Marcel Lefebvre. The White Fathers' Général Council concluded that - in this situation - Rummelhardt could not continue as editor and asked the Vicar Apostolic of Bobo Dioulasso to find a replacement.¹⁴⁴

143 AGMAfr Notices nécrologiques XVIII 121-126.

144 AGMAfr Général Council Minutes, p.70, October 11* 1954.



Joseph-Roger de Benoist.

On January 14th 1955 Rummelhardt was replaced by Joseph-Roger de Benoist (1923-). Rummelhardt continued his career as a journalist, while founding and directing the *Afrikanum* at Cologne and running a diocesan press and information office in Strasbourg. He died in 1974.¹⁴⁵ Meanwhile, the-soon-to-be-notorious Lefebvre pursued his vendetta against the White Fathers and their newspaper.

In October 1958, a year after taking office, Léo Volker received an angry letter from Lefebvre, now Archbishop of Dakar, but and still Apostolic Delegate.¹⁴⁶ His complaint against *Afrique Nouvelle* was that "The paper always appears favourable to extremist groups, which demand with vehemence, and even violence, immediate and total (political) independence". This, wrote the archbishop, was playing into the hands of Communism. The paper had also shown sympathy for Sekou Touré, the Président of Guinea, which had opted out of the French Communauté earlier in the year, and whose bishops had declared that Sekou Touré was preparing a popular democracy in which the Catholic religion had no place. The letter concluded: "I cannot tolerate any longer this lack of a critical spirit, in spite of the censor's repeated warnings. De Benoist listens to nobody." Lefebvre followed up this letter with a demand for the removal of de Benoist.¹⁴⁷

The following year, Lefebvre left Dakar and Archbishop Emile André Jean-Marie Maury succeeded him as apostolic delegate. Maury informed Volker that the archbishops' assembly had taken a unanimous decision that the entire *Afrique Nouvelle* team should be replaced and the newspaper entrusted to the laity.¹⁴⁸ Volker had no option but to withdraw all his missionaries from Dakar. However, Maury continued to

145 Cf. Notices Nécrologiques, loc.cit.

146 AGMAfr 36900009 Lefebvre to Volker October 6th 1958

147 AGMAfr 36900010.

148 AGMAfr 36900017 Maury to Volker April 25th 1959

consult Volker about the situation in Sénégal and in Guinea, but he was still in communication with Lefebvre and was adamant that de Benoist should not return.¹⁴⁹ The saga of *Afrique Nouvelle* illustrates the uncertainties of the situation confronted by the Church on the eve of independence. The Missionaries of Africa, however, showed nothing if not consistency in their support of African nationalism.

The African Cultural Awakening

1947-1967, when Volker was assistant and then superior general, were the years when African intellectuals, writers, poets and novelists, first began to make an impact on the world's reading public. This happened first of all in francophone circles, but African writers in English were not slow to follow. In 1947, with the help of his compatriot, the Senegalese poet and politician Léopold Sédar Senghor, Alioune Diop had founded *Présence Africaine*, a quarterly cultural, political and literary magazine, with its own publishing house in Paris. Senghor could not be ignored even by Catholic missionaries. Not only was he the founder (with Aimé Césaire) of the so-called Négritude movement, but he was elected président of Sénégal in 1960 and remained in office for two decades. In Guinea, the novelist Camara Laye was beginning to enjoy an international reputation in the mid 1950s.¹⁵⁰ Shortly afterwards, the Nigérien writer, Chinua Achebe's first novel appeared and the playwright, Wole Soyinka's first plays were published and performed in London.

French African literature was more open to Catholic influence than its English counterpart. It was not surprising, therefore, that *Présence Africaine* should publish in 1956, the year before Volker became superior general, a collection of essays by African (and other black) francophone priests, entitled *Des prêtres noirs s'interrogent*. The contributions were wide ranging and hard-hitting, all of them, in one way or another, dealing with indigenisation, and all insisting that African priests had a right to think for themselves and to make known their opinions. Many of the authors had belonged to the Association of Saint Augustine, a group

149 AGMAfr 66900021 Maury to Volker 20th Jan 1960, 66900024 Maury to Volker 12th Feb 1960, 66900028 Maury to Volker Jan 4th 1960.

150 Camara Laye's books were published in France, and appeared in English translation as well as in the French original.



First number of the magazine *Présence Africaine*.

of African priests who had studied together in Rome. In 1949-1950, the University of Lovanium was founded at Kinshasa, under the auspices of the Catholic University of Louvain (Leuven). This published in 1965, the most important piece of African Theological scholarship to date, Tarcisse Tshiban-gu's *Théologie positive et théologie spéculative*.

This ferment of creativity directly affected only a small group of French speaking African priests, but it had long term and wide ranging results. This was especially true of the Congo, where, in spite of the crisis of the early 1960s and its long drawn out aftermath under Mobutu, the country (that had been renamed Zaïre) became the inspiration for liturgical inculturation even in Anglophone Eastern Africa.

Missionaries, who completed their initial formation at the time the Second Vatican Council opened, knew all about "adaptation". This was then the favoured term for the superficial adjustments thought necessary to make Christianity acceptable to non-Christians. The term was briefly superseded by "incarnation" in the mission documents of the Council. Although it proved theologically inappropriate, it was certainly a more dynamic term. Adaptation theory also spoke of "pierres d'attente", the projecting stonework left by masons, on to which a further extension could be built.¹⁵¹ Again, the expression was replaced in the Council documents by the patristic phrase "seeds of the Word" which suggested that the elements of truth in non-Christian religions were not simply waiting for a Christian addition, but which themselves could germinate and come to fulfilment within Christianity. In the period immediately following the Council, many missionaries looked forward to an "African Christianity", a phrase borrowed by Pope Paul VI for his Kampala address of 1969. The concept was vague, but in general terms it meant a form of the Christian faith that looked and sounded more African.

¹⁵¹ The French phrase was often mistranslated as "stepping stones".

Liturgical experimentation, although encouraged by the likes of An-nibale Bugnini, the Salesian archbishop who was secretary of the Liturgical Consilium in Rome, was rare. The Ndzon Melen Mass at Yaoundé (Cameroun) started only in 1968; and the author's Kimbu homiletic experiment in Tanzania took place also in the same year.¹⁵² A high point was reached with the Zaïre Mass in 1975. The ordinary missionary did not possess the ethnographic material or expertise for such experiments, but welcomed and even expected them. They were accompanied by a ferment of translation and musical composition by the African clergy. In fact it could be said that there was a climate of expectation, a volatile mixture waiting to be touched off when the moment was ripe.

Meanwhile, the growing availability of African liturgical music, the introduction (not always without a reaction from the hierarchy) of African musical instruments and even of African liturgical gestures and dance, meant that Sunday Mass was becoming an African cultural event, although the mould of the Roman Rite was not actually threatened, let alone broken.

The 1970s saw a wave of liturgical inculturation that enjoyed the approval of the Bishops' Conférences. An example is that of the Liturgical Research Committee in Tanzania, which was commissioned by the Tanzania Episcopal Conférence to create a Eucharistie Prayer of "African Values" and an "Ujamaa"¹⁵³ Eucharistie Prayer of the Trinity".¹⁵⁴ The accession of Pope John Paul II in 1978 and changes in the African episcopate brought the liturgical creativity of the 1970s to an end.

Recruitment and Formation

Total membership of the Society increased by five hundred in the ten years of Volker's term of office. By 1967 it stood at 3, 618.¹⁵⁵ There were only 67 departures of priests in the same period and most of these joined

152 Cf. Abega, P., "Liturgical Adaptation" in Fasholé-Luke et al.: *Christianity in Independent Africa*, Rex Collings London, 1978, pp. 597-605; Shorter, Aylward, "Form and Content in the African Sermon - an Experiment", *AFER*, vol. 11, 3, 1969, pp. 265-279.

153 Ujamaa or "familyhood" was Julius Nyerere's form of African socialism.

154 The author who created an African Eucharistie Prayer after the 1969 papal visit, was briefly acting chairman of this Committee.

155 For statistical information cf. Decennial Report, loc.cit, pp. 307-309. A much larger number of Brothers left the Society, the majority after temporary oath.

other congregations or were incardinated in dioceses. The average age of the Society, however, was rising and, even more ominously, recruitment was falling, especially in the Netherlands and particularly in the case of Brother candidates. In spite of this, Volker and his team were determined to implement the 1957 Chapter's request to carry out a more thorough internationalization of the Society's scholasticates. They continued Durrieu's policy of sending confreres for further studies at the Gregorianum, the Biblicum, IPEA (Institut Pontifical d'Études Arabes - now PISAI) and various other places of Third Level learning. The lectures and learning resources of the scholasticates reflected the achievements of the New Theology, the Biblical and Liturgical Renewal and - to some extent even - the Social Sciences.¹⁵⁶ In 1966, IPEA, which was the Society's responsibility, moved into more spacious premises at the Palazzo Apollinare.¹⁵⁷



Before the end of Volker's mandate, several scholasticates were exploring the possibility of links with local universities and Catholic faculties of Theology. In London, spurred on by *Ad Gentes Divinitus* and *Ecclesiae Sanctae*, White Fathers and Mill Hill Missionaries were already contemplating the creation of a consortium. A committee met in London to study this proposal in April 1967.¹⁵⁸

The 1957 Chapter had requested that a pastoral year be added to the scholasticate programme. This was envisaged as a further series of lectures from experts who were only available in Europe.¹⁵⁹ Accordingly, sessions for those newly appointed to the missions were organized at

156 The author found at Eastview works by Congar, Howell, Jungmann, Durwell, Teilhard de Chardin, Maritain, Scheeben, Casel and Tresmontant and was influenced by all these writers.

157 PE 571, Sept-Oct 1966, p.397.

158 PE 582, Oct-Nov 1967, pp.445-446; Shorter, Aylward: *An Achievement Without Parallel, A History of the Missionary Institute London*, London, 2007, pp.9-15.

159 Cf. Decennial Report, loc. cit., p.317.

Mours, near Paris, and at Oak Lodge, near London. They were heavily criticised for simply adding more lecture content to the scholasticate syllabus.¹⁶⁰ More useful were the thirteen language centres started in Africa. In most cases these also offered a "hands-on" pastoral and social initiation to the region.

The usefulness of (White Father) Junior Seminaries had been under discussion for some years. It was widely felt that they took too many missionaries away from Africa and that they produced too few priests for the Society. Volker had the courage to bring them to an end, and they were replaced for the time being by a variety of other expedients in order to foster the vocation of aspirants of school age.¹⁶¹

The 1957 Chapter took various decisions regarding the integration of Brothers in the Society and their training. It fell to Volker and his team to put these into effect. The last traces of a clear *séparation* between priests and brothers were abolished. This was entirely to the superior general's liking. In 1960 he convened a meeting at Marienthal, Luxemburg, at which the formation of Brothers was discussed. Following this he published a programme of studies for scholasticates of Brothers. In novitiates, the principle of training Clerics and Brothers together, on a basis of complete equality was accepted and put into practice. Volker also named a number of Brother consultors who were to take part in the 1967 Chapter.¹⁶²

In addition to the three social training centres for African students in Africa itself, centres were started in Europe for African students and élites. The German Province opened its Cologne Africanum in 1961, in the presence of Julius Nyerere and Jozef Blomjous.¹⁶³ In 1960 Claver House opened in London. Its premises were owned by the Society, which was also responsible for its finances. It was staffed by Jesuits of the Catholic Social Guild.¹⁶⁴

160 The author was obliged to take three months out of his university leave of absence for African fieldwork, in order to follow the 1964 session at Oak Lodge!

161 Fr. Léo Volker, p.14; *Decennial Report*, loc.cit, p.311.

162 Volker, *Circular Letter no.3*, 4th November 1958; *Decennial Report*, loc. cit., p.352; Fr. Léo Volker, p. 13; PE 574, January 1967, pp.6-10.

163 PE 514, April 1961, pp. 212-215.

164 It closed in 1989. Its Director, Paul Crâne SJ. (1910-1996), had been the *Général* Secretary of the Guild up to 1960. Cf. also Fr. Léo Volker, p.22.

Fidei Donum Priests

On April 21st 1957, eighteen months before he died, Pope Pius XII issued the encyclical known as *Fidei Donum* ("The Gift of faith"). The encyclical dealt with the present condition of the Catholic Missions, especially in Africa, and the tangible effects of the Pope's words are still with us today. Pius XII was worried about the prospects for Catholicism in many mission countries, but *Fidei Donum* focussed on Africa. The Pope admired the great achievements of missionaries to African countries, but he was apprehensive about the Church's fragility there. One must not "rashly conclude that once a hierarchy has been established there is no further need for the work of the missionaries" he wrote.¹⁶⁵ Africa was undergoing sweeping changes in social, economic and political life. It was also suffering the onslaughts of atheistic materialism and the prospect of a "nationalist backlash" in the wake of decolonization. However, the most serious problem confronting the African Church was the uneven ratio between clergy and faithful. There were simply insufficient priests to serve the growing Catholic population, let alone to convert the unevangelized. Missionary vocations were beginning to diminish and there was no hope that the growing number of African priests would fill the gap in the foreseeable future.

The Pope drew the Bishops' attention to the fact that the whole of the episcopate was collectively responsible for the Church's mission to the world. It was therefore up to Bishops in every country to see what contribution they could make to the solution of the problem, from every source at their command.¹⁶⁶ The Pope urged them especially to allow some of their priests "to go and spend some time in working for the Bishops of Africa".¹⁶⁷ He had particularly in mind those specialist tasks for which the local clergy had not been trained, such as teaching in institutes of higher studies. When, in response to Pius XII's appeal, such clergy were available, they became known as "Fidei Donum priests".

Eight years later, at the close of the Second Vatican Council, the world's Bishops were even more fully aware of their collective respon-

165 *Fidei Donum*, 11.

166 *Fidei Donum*, 63.

167 *Fidei Donum*, 73.

sibility to solve the crisis of ministry in Africa and elsewhere in the mission world. By that time also, there had already been a fruitful response to the papal appeal of 1957. The missionary decree, *Ad Gentes Divinitus* of 1965 echoed *Fidei Donum* and called upon Bishops to send "some of their very best priests who offer themselves for mission work" to missionary dioceses that lacked clergy, "at least for a time".¹⁶⁸

Ad Gentes Divinitus has much to say about the lengthy and specialized formation that is needed by full time missionaries, such as only well organized and experienced missionary institutes can ensure.¹⁶⁹ On the subject of *Fidei Donum* priests, besides the emphasis on selecting "the best", the decree speaks somewhat vaguely about "proper training".¹⁷⁰ There was always going to be an invidious comparison between the professional missionary and the short-term *Fidei Donum*, perhaps even a risk of rivalry and antagonism. If the arrangement was simply a "bishop-to-bishop" one it was fraught with all kinds of unwelcome possibilities. The chances of success for the *Fidei Donum* priest improved if the individuals concerned were "chaperoned" by a missionary society, or if the *Fidei Donum* priests were able to create their own organization.^m Yet there were still some who assumed that the ordinary seminary training, which they had received, qualified them to serve as a priest anywhere in the world.

The *Fidei Donum* contract was usually for three years, with the possibility that it could be renewed. A long-term contract could last for ten years, with the requirement of language learning. Many of the priests were dissatisfied and thought that spending six months learning an African language was a waste of time. Some felt under-employed.^m There was clearly a need for proper planning and spiritual support. In Belgium an organization called Société des Auxiliaires de la Mission

168 *Ad Gentes Divinitus*, 38,

169 *Ad Gentes Divinitus*, 24-27

170 *Ad Gentes Divinitus*, 38.

171 As Président of the Missionary Institute London in 1988-1995, the author had considerable experience of the vagaries in the training of *Fidei Donum* priests. It was well nigh impossible to co-ordinate their departures for the missions and to ensure a "proper training".

172 AGMAfr 566373, Utilisation des prêtres dits "Fidei Donum".

(SAM) was developed.¹⁷³ By 1960 it had 41 priest members, with a further 26 priests in training. In 1961 the Archdiocese of Milan formed the so-called "Ambrosian Missionaries" who went to Kariba in Zambia and continued to serve in the diocèses of Monze and Lusaka. One of them, Emilio Patriarca became the Bishop of Monze in 1999.¹⁷⁴

By 1963 there were 105 Fidei Donum priests in ex-Belgian Africa, mainly from four Belgian dioceses, and there were French diocesans in ten Francophone countries of Africa, as well as in Anglophone Zambia.¹⁷⁵ On the whole, the Fidei Donum priests were well received by missionary societies, as well as by the African diocesan clergy.¹⁷⁶ In 2003 there were still Fidei Donum priests in many parts of Africa, including five Koreans in Solwezi, Zambia. Four years later, there were two diocesan missionaries in Kasese, Uganda; and in 2011 there were eight in Musoma, Tanzania.¹⁷⁷

Although they were already present in African dioceses in 1957-1967, they were scattered very sparsely, and few Missionaries of Africa came across them in the field. Their impact was diverse. In a lengthy period of service in Tabora Archdiocese, Francis Nolan (1934-) met only two Fidei Donum priests in 1969. They were Spanish. Both learned Kiswahili well and spent time in parishes run by the Missionaries of Africa. One had a nervous breakdown after only two years in Africa and returned to Spain. The other stayed six or seven years and was put in charge of a catechist school. He died of a heart attack not long after his final departure from Africa.¹⁷⁸ In a way, these cases illustrate both the strengths and weaknesses of the Fidei Donum project.

173 AGMAfr 612475, pp. 27-47.

174 WWW.RadioVaticana.org., Fifty Years of Service of the Ambrosian Missionaries.

175 CIPA Bulletin n° 170, 21st December 1963.

176 AGMAfr 612475, pp. 27-47.177 Figures gleaned from Catholic statistics online.

178 Communication from Francis Nolan, email November 9th 2011.

What was it like to be a missionary in the field in 1957-1967?

In the average diocese/vicariate missionary numbers were still high and there was as yet no generalized discussion of a missionary "phasing out" or "moratorium". That was to come after 1967 with a wider questioning of missionary identity. In the Society of Missionaries of Africa an incipient fall in vocations was beginning to be felt. A growth in average age meant that there was a moderate increase in the annual number of deaths. The number of departures was stable. The need for specialized studies after ordination also affected the number of priests available for new foundations. The number of brothers, however, was growing. The net result of these statistics was that mission work tended to be static and not to experience very much growth.¹⁷⁹ Indigenous African leadership was still extremely small. Missionary numbers reached their highest in 1966 and the episcopate was basically still white.¹⁸⁰ Where there was an African bishop and African priests in leadership positions, this meant that there were hardly any superfluous local priests for ordinary pastoral work. In 1962, there were approximately 500 African priests in the dioceses/vicariates of the Society and more than 340 ordinations were foreseen.¹⁸¹ More African priests were emerging from seminaries run by the Society than missionary priests from the Society's own scholasticates.

The experience of white missionaries living in community with black clergy (although foreseen by the Society) was actually rather rare. Rome also developed a policy of appointing Africans as metropolitan archbishops. This was kind of short-cut to visible African leadership in the Church and, obviously, concerned a relatively small number of dioceses.

179 This analysis is based on the conclusions of the Comparative General Statistics compiled in 1962, AGMAfr. What is interesting is that there were few departures as yet. This was to come as the combined result of socio-political factors and of the aggiornamento precipitated by Vatican II 1962-1965 and the Renewal Chapter of 1967.

180 In May 1967 the Society recorded its highest total to date of 3,618 members. This represented an increase of 526 since 1957. PE 579, June 1967 p. 249.

181 AGMAfr Comparative General Statistics, p. 40. Numbers are approximate.

Although missionary numbers were still high, the number of Christians was growing out of all proportion to the clergy. The ratio of priests to people was becoming ever more unfavourable. Improved means of transport (motorcycles and cars) meant that outstations could still be regularly visited, but the relationship between pastor and people was in danger of becoming superficial. The result was the so-called "age of the catechist". In 1957, Jozef Blomjous created the prototypical catechist training centre at Bukumbi in Mwanza Diocese. Between 1957 and 1967 some forty to fifty such centres were established all over sub-Saharan Africa. Missionaries had to deal with a hierarchy of rural catechists, both trained and untrained. This was recognized in the missionary decree and other documents of Vatican II (e.g. *Ad Gentes Divinitus*, 15).

In 1957-67 African religious congregations of women were multiplying and beginning to recruit in ever increasing numbers. Virtually every diocese had its own diocesan foundation. The Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa (MSOLA) collaborated with eleven Bishops in the founding of 21 congregations of African Sisters. Collaboration with the sisters in hospital work, and in schools and colleges for girls, as well as in catechetical and pastoral work, was increasingly demanded of the Missionaries of Africa. The 1960s also saw large numbers of lay volunteers, both Catholic and secular, working with missionaries in the educational and medical fields: the Volunteer Mission Movement (VMM), *Viatres Christi* (VC), Volunteer Service Overseas (VSO), the American Peace Corps, the French *Délégation Catholique pour la Coopération* (DCC) the Austrian, Dutch or German Volunteers... These provided another aspect of collaborative ministry for the missionary in the field. By the end of the 1970s they had dwindled almost out of existence.

1957-1967 was also the great period of handing over institutions to the government, especially Church schools and colleges of education. Missionaries were often confronted by teachers who did not practice their faith or who were not Catholics. Although the Society's own apostolic schools and junior seminaries were all abolished in Europe by the end of the 1960s, junior seminaries remained in Africa as private secondary schools. They were important sources of vocations and places of élite religious education for those who did not persevere. Missionaries

continued to be involved with them. Governments were slower to take over mission hospitals, since these needed expensive equipment and highly trained staff.

Although the urban growth which followed on political independence had not yet got under way, outstation chapels were multiplying in the rural areas. Christians were becoming increasingly reluctant to walk long distances to attend Mass on Sundays. They wanted to have their own places of worship and instruction. Missionaries were involved in the complex process of planning their safaris, so as to cater for the particular configuration of settlements. Accessible sub-parishes were one solution. Another was to create zones, in which "saturation" visits could be conducted, over a fairly lengthy period of time.

News of the decisions and documents of Vatican II were filtering slowly down to missionaries at the grass roots. The Council ended its deliberations towards the end of 1965, and it took more than a year or two to organize information and documentation programmes on the achievements of the Council. This led to considerable uncertainty among missionaries at the grass roots. AMECEA held a study conference in Nairobi in September 1967 on the theme *"Pastoral Perspectives in Eastern Africa after Vatican II"*.¹⁸² The conference envisaged setting up pastoral institutes and pastoral centres, as well as local pastoral and information programmes. These, together with the traditional means of religious education provided by schools, seminaries and colleges of education, were to collaborate in making the teaching of the Council known. The most influential of the new institutes was the AMECEA Pastoral Institute at Gaba in Uganda. This opened its doors in 1968, offering an annual course to priests, religious and teachers.¹⁸³

Without firm direction, or at least its prospect, missionaries tended to be at a loss. This was especially the case if the bishop/vicar apostolic died or resigned at this crucial juncture. A case in point is provided by the Diocese of Mbeya in Tanganyika (Tanzania). Antoon van Oorschot (1899-1964) was the highly authoritarian bishop of Mbeya. Arriving in Rome for the opening of the Second Vatican Council in 1962, he was

182 AMECEA, *Pastoral Perspectives in Eastern Africa after Vatican II*, Nairobi, 1967.

183 The author was a member of staff from 1968 to 1977.

heard ¹⁸⁴ to remark: "I don't know what this Council is ail about. Everything is going very well in Mbeya Diocèse." Van Oorschot died in the Netherlands after the third session of the Council, on December 10th 1964. His death was followed by a vacancy lasting nearly two years. This was caused by seven of the eight diocesan priests, who wanted one of their number to succeed him and who had been deemed to have "interfered with the episcopal election". ¹⁸⁵ Confusion followed the withdrawal of van Oorschot's iron hand, especially in the absence of any firm directives concerning *aggiornamento* in the diocese. An unauthorized parish was started. A missionary began conducting highly questionable liturgical experiments. Several of the clergy went on leave without permission, two of them driving to South Africa for a holiday. The new (African) bishop, when he was appointed in 1966, was faced with the difficult task of restoring order and embarking on an authentic renewal. ¹⁸⁶

A good example, however, was being given in the neighbouring diocese of Tabora, where Marko Mihayo had become archbishop in 1960. Barely a year after the closing of the Council, the clergy, diocesan and missionary, were summoned to Kipalapala Senior Seminary for a well organized liturgical event that took place in 1966. This was the celebration of the Eucharist in Kiswahili, the national language, to musical settings composed by Ambrosi Mhaliga, a priest of the diocese, on the seminary staff. The bishop himself was present and the experience was generally positive. ¹⁸⁷

A source of disquiet for the ordinary missionary in the field was the news that filtered in concerning the violence taking place in other countries, especially Congo in 1961-1965. There was a certain measure of local violence, incipient civil wars in Sudan and Mozambique, the Lumpa Church in Zambia, the 1964 army mutiny in Tanzania, the Zanzibar revolution and unrest that was everywhere connected with political independence. Once they had got over their fear that such troubles might turn into another Congo, missionaries were generally well disposed to-

184 By the author.

185 James D. Sangu, a priest of Sumbawanga Diocèse, was appointed in September 1966.

185 Mgr. James D. Sangu..

187 The author took part in this new liturgy.

wards newly independent governments, despite lingering fears of their socialist ideology.¹⁸⁸

In 1967, *Pastoral Perspectives in Eastern Africa after Vatican II* considered very briefly the possibility of dividing up parishes into smaller communities.¹⁸⁹ News was already beginning to filter into Africa about the experimentation with "basic ecclesial communities" in Panama, Brazil and the Philippines. It was not until the 1970s that such ideas began to produce any impact on missionaries in Africa. Latin America was known to be the leading region for pastoral initiatives and the endorsement of basic communities by the Bishops at Medellin in 1969 was reported. This was a precursor of the AMECEA Catechetical Congress in 1973, which took "Forming Adult Communities" as its theme and of the Rome Synod on Evangelization in the following year, which also mentioned small Christian communities (SCC).¹⁹⁰ This was the cue for the AMECEA study conferences on small Christian communities in 1976 and 1979, and that of SECAM in 1984. As a result, building small Christian communities became a pastoral priority almost everywhere on the continent. This could not be clearly foreseen by the missionary in the field in 1967, although there were already some rudimentary experiments along these lines in the 1960s.¹⁹¹

Undoubtedly, the high point of the 1960s came at the end of the decade with the visit of Pope Paul VI to Kampala in 1969. This was the first papal visit to Africa and the whole of the African Church converged on Kampala. Pilgrimages from virtually every African country were present and missionaries were closely involved in their organization, as well as in the events of the visit itself.¹⁹² The climax came when Paul VI, in his Kampala address, pronounced the unforgettable words: "You may and you must have an African Christianity", words that set the seal on the missionary achievements and ideals of the 1950s and 1960s.

188 Even AMECEA found it necessary to discuss the Arusha Déclaration, cf. op. cit., p.49.

189 Page 31, 20, c.

190 Cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 1975, 58.

191 One experiment with SCC was started by the author of this paper in Mbeya Diocese, Tanzania, in 1965-1966; another was the "Chama" experiment by Maryknoll Missionaries in Musoma Diocese.

192 The author was a member of the Papal Visit Liturgical Committee, and was one of the MCs in the papal "spectaculars".

Preparation of the 1967 Chapter

Volker knew that the Chapter of 1967 would be out of the ordinary and that it would have to carry out an *aggiornamento* of the Society. He therefore conducted a very careful and very thorough preparation. Consultations in view of the Chapter began already in June 1965.¹⁹³ Many of the suggestions received were inspired by the documents of Vatican II, especially *Lumen Gentium*. As we have seen, it was clear to Volker that the Chapter must provide a better definition of the identity of the Society, and that on this would depend the answer to many other questions. However, he warned against starting this discussion from the purely juridical standpoint of whether White Fathers are, or are not, religious. The Chapter would have to begin with the Gospel and the evangelical counsels.

The 1967 General Chapter - the Chapter of *aggiornamento* or renewal - was, to a great extent, designed and inspired by Léo Volker himself. He remained Superior General until the end of the first session and it was this session that set the agenda for the Chapter's second sitting. Even more to the point, the Chapter as a whole was meticulously prepared by Volker in the final years of his superiorate. In fact, it is true to say that no General Chapter hitherto had been so well prepared as that of 1967. Moreover, this event was a veritable "watershed" in the Society's history, marking a complete change of outlook from a juridically orientated, rule-bound organization, to one with (what Volker called) "a new mode of being and thinking".¹⁹⁴ The renewal that took place in 1967 was not something static but an experience that was dynamic, the discovery of how "to serve God's plan of salvation in the Church of today".¹⁹⁵

A major influence on Volker was, of course, the Second Vatican Council, and especially, in its penultimate session, the debate on the missionary decree (*Ad Gentes Divinitus*) that was promulgated in 1965. There was also the decree on the up-to-date renewal of the religious life (*Perfectae Caritatis*) published at the same time, in the final session. A year

193 PE 559, June, 1965, pp.283-284.

194 PE 575, February 1967, 65-68.

195 Documents of the XXth Chapter, Rome 1967, 8.

before the Chapter opened Volker declared that its first and foremost duty was "to give a better definition of the nature of the Society. After this is resolved, a clear answer can be given to the other questions."¹⁹⁶ The definition of the nature of the Society was traditionally juridical. In their very first article, the 1959 Constitutions state: "The Society of Missionaries of Africa is a clerical and pontifical institute. The Members of the Society are Clerics and Brothers who live in community and observe the same Constitutions".¹⁹⁷ In the following month, Volker commented on the tensions that existed between the apostolate and the spiritual life. "Rules exist to create harmony between the two. Rules start in life and are made for life."¹⁹⁸ Volker wanted to define the Society - not by rules but - with reference to its role in God's plan of salvation and its share in the mission of the Church. To define the nature of the Society it was necessary to begin with a reading of the Gospels and a meditation on the evangelical counsels.¹⁹⁹ As a result, the 1967 Chapter delivered its final answers to the questions placed before it in a series of declarations and instructions that were partly pastoral and partly legislative.²⁰⁰ Alongside the extensive Capitular Documents a "juridical handbook" was published, containing the executive decisions of the Chapter. Henceforth in the Society a distinction was always made between "Constitutions" and "Laws", between "life" and "legislation".

Before the Second Vatican Council was convened in October 1962, there was already a strong disagreement in Father Volker's General Council about the nature of the Society. This dissension had a juridical basis and was occasioned by the appointment of a diocesan priest to be the first African Bishop of Karema, Tanzania.²⁰¹ Karema was one of the most successful vicariates controlled by the White Fathers and Msakila

196 PE 568, May 1966, pp. 221-224.

197 This is a variant from the 1947 (1954) Constitutions which state in the first article: "The Society of Missionaries of Africa is an Institute of Secular Clerics who live in community..." There is no mention of "brothers" until Article 3, in connection with the rule of three. They are mentioned again in Article 14 in connection with the habit. It is only in Article 19 that we find a definition, i.e. that the Society admits lay-brothers as helpers of the priests.

198 PE, 569, June 1966, pp. 268-270.

199 PE, 570, July-August 1966, pp. 327-332.

200 *Documents of the XX¹¹ Chapter*, Rome 1967.

201 G-A Mondor, Communication of February 23rd 2012.

was the fourth African priest to be raised to the episcopate in their territories. The previous three (Kiwanuka, Rugambwa and Bigirumwami) had all been given specially created small dioceses staffed by African clergy. This was not the case with Karema which was an extensive and well populated missionary diocese still largely staffed by White Fathers. Msakila's appointment in December 1958, not long after Volker took office, raised in an acute manner the question of the White Fathers' missionary role in such a situation. Novice masters and formators were wont to explain to their charges that the Society of Missionaries of Africa was a "vanishing Society". Its task was to implant the Church and its structures and, when African Bishops and their clergy had come into existence, missionaries had no further role to play. Their task was complete.²⁰² The question was posed by Leonhard Kaufmann (1926-1995), the canonist who advised Volker and his team: Could the Society still call itself "missionary" after surrendering responsibility for dioceses? The Society of Jésus, for example, in the service of local Churches all over the world, did not call itself "missionary".²⁰³

Propaganda Fide had always regarded The White Fathers as missionaries par excellence, but could offer no help in this discussion when Volker approached its Prefect for advice.²⁰⁴ Volker was told to find the solution himself. It must be admitted that dioceses controlled by African Bishops were not removed from the oversight of Propaganda Fide, nor did they cease to be missionary in character. They had many "missionary activities", of which primary evangelization was usually the most important, and the Society could enter into contract with these dioceses for service in such tasks. The widespread introduction of native bishops in the 1950s led eventually to the *ius commissionis* being abrogated altogether in 1969, to be followed by the full deployment of the Vatican diplomatic service in its stead to oversee the running of dioceses and advise on appointments.²⁰⁵

202 This was the opinion of Kees van den Bosch (1911-1998), the author's novice master at s'Heerenberg in 1957-1958.

203 Mondor loc.cit.

204 Mondor, *ibid.*

205 AAS 1969, pp.281 ff.

All this was made explicit in *Ad Gentes Divinitus*, the decree which was the product of the conciliar debates to which Volker made a prominent contribution. When a local Church is properly constituted, it does not surrender its responsibility for missionary activity, and missionary institutes are still required for special tasks.²⁰⁶ Besides missionary tasks ad intra, the diocese of an African Bishop, in common with dioceses throughout the world, also had missionary responsibilities ad extra.

All of this was becoming clear to Volker even before the Council opened in October 1962. Earlier in the year he held a plenary assembly of Provincials and Regionals. Although he set great store by this mid-term meeting, illness made him unable to exploit the occasion as fully as he had planned. Nevertheless, a far-reaching survey of the needs and opinions of confreres took place in 1961, in preparation for the assembly. This served as an indication of what missionaries were thinking and it was, in effect, a dress rehearsal for the pre-capitular phase that was due to take place. Naturally, there were varied, contradictory experiences and opinions, but with regard to the work of the apostolate, there was a fairly general lament that the situation in which missionaries found themselves was too complex and specialized, and that pastoral methods were too traditional. They were not adequate in the changing circumstances of the mission. There was particular dissatisfaction with the decisions of the 1957 Chapter. Significantly, the respondents yearned for a spiritual link with the Society and not merely an administrative link.²⁰⁷

All of this gave Volker pause for thought. Members of the Society would (like himself) learn what was expected of them at this juncture of the Church's history when the Council finally opened in October 1962. Appointed a Council Father early in 1963, Volker was determined, with the Council's help, to find answers to the questions he and his confreres were asking, and it was this expectation that led to his intervention on the place of the missionary in the Church, during the debate on *Lumen Gentium*, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church. When the Council ended in 1965 and Volker could devote himself full time to the preparation of the General Chapter, the questions he asked and the sugges-

206 Cf. *Ad Gentes*, 28-34.

207 AGMAfr, Summary of replies to the 1961 Questionnaire.

tions he made derived - like much of the missionary decree itself - from *Lumen Gentium*.²⁰⁸ Even before the publication of *Ad Gentes Divinitus*, he told the Society that it was from the Council that he had learned what it meant to be a missionary, and that it all came down to practical charity.²⁰⁹ Later in 1965 he wrote about the consultations which were about to take place in view of the Chapter. He was aware, he said, that some feared the Chapter would change the nature of the Society, while others were afraid it would not go far enough. He cited both *Lumen Gentium* and the conference of Schillebeeckx that he had published in *Petit Echo*. The Chapter would have to find a balance between the Society's traditional orientation and the apostolic activities required of it by the Bishops. He asked the rhetorical question: "Do missionary institutes still have a role to play in the Church of today?"²¹⁰ Confreres were to answer the question calmly and fearlessly. In February 1966 Volker gave his own succinct answer: "our aggiornamento" consisted in being "at the service of young Churches".²¹¹

By March the responses to the pre-capitular consultation came in from the provinces and régions. They were grouped by the Secretary General and an ad hoc committee into 34 files under five headings: the charism of the Founder, the tradition of the Society, review of the present situation, the doctrine of the Church (especially the teaching of Vatican II) and answers to concrete questions. It was, said Volker, "an effective working tool".²¹² Each White Father was now invited to reflect on the files.²¹³ And, in July-August seven themes from seven principal files were given to the provincial assemblies to consider.²¹⁴ In September-October Volker published the list of the pre-capitular assemblies, their members and venues.²¹⁵ In January 1967 several innovations were announced. These included the nomination of Brother consultants to attend the Chapter and a consultation of African Bishops who did not be-

208 PE 561, Sept-Oct, 1965, pp. 398-402.

209 PE 556, March 1965, pp. 121-125.

210 PE 561, loc. cit.

211 PE 565, February 1966, pp. 57-60.

212 PE 566, March 1966, pp. 108-110.

213 PE, 568, May, 1966, pp. 221-224.

214 PE, 570, July-August 1966, p. 359.

215 PE, 571, Sept-Oct, 1966, pp. 386-393.

long to the Society.²¹⁶ Finally, in April, a month before the Chapter opened, Volker wrote his farewell letter. It was already clear that his health did not allow him to stand again for election. Apart from the usual expressions of gratitude and requests for forgiveness, he noted that: "not only have exterior conditions changed, but our own interior attitudes".²¹⁷ Now there was a need to recruit acceptable numbers and to carry out an apostolic labour that was fruitful.

The author of Father Volker's obituary profile in 1971 had this to say about the preparation of the 1967 General Chapter:

During the last years of (Father Volker's) time in office his main preoccupation was the preparation of the 1967 Chapter which was to be our *aggiornamento* chapter. He realized how very important this was and he wanted the profound meaning of our missionary vocation to be brought out fully and clearly in the light of Vatican II. Without a shadow of a doubt one can say that, with his broadminded outlook and his simple good nature, he succeeded in steering the Society through the choppy waters of recent years without mishap and without taking in too radical a manner, options that might have shackled either the orientation of the Society or the work of the Chapter.²¹⁸

In addition, there was one further question of importance that had to be laid before the Chapter. This was the question of the Society's finances. A special commission on financial questions met in Rome for ten days in October. Its outcome was to be placed before the General Council which would submit further proposals to the Chapter. The problems centred on the financial difficulties of the German Province, which had sunk too much money into the audio-visual "Sono Viso" series. Bailing out this province meant that the Society could not put any capital aside for other projects.²¹⁹ This one-off financial meeting set a precedent for regular meetings of this kind which was followed by Volker's successors.

216 PE, 574, January 1967, pp. 6-10.

217 PE, 577, April 1967, pp. 148-150.

218 Father Léo Volker 1906-1970, Rome 1971, p. 16.

219 PE 573, December 1966, pp.498-499; PE 580, July 1967, p. 370. Verbal communication from Sjef Donders June 17th2003. Cfalso Decennial Report, loc.cit, p. 330.

The Sono Viso Affair

The Sono-Viso affair came to a head in 1964. It virtually bankrupted the German Province and was a source of extreme anxiety to Father Volker in the first session of the 1967 Chapter.²²⁰ The project was the brainchild of Franz Gypkens (1911-1967*) who was Provincial of Germany at the time. Gypkens was a gifted, not to say brilliant, publicist for the White Fathers and their work in Africa. He was well known in Germany as the author of a number of books, several of which are still in print today (2012). He also had a great sense of occasion. This was évi- dent in 1961 at the opening of the Cologne Afrikanum, as a hostel for African students and centre for cultural exchange with Africa. The ceremony took place in the presence of the newly created Cardinal, Laurean Rugambwa; the premier of self-governing Tanganyika, Julius Nyerere and the well known missionary Bishop, Jozef Blomjous.²²¹ Gypkens was also instrumental in obtaining funding for important projects outside Germany, such as the Claver House course for African leaders which opened in London at the same time as the Cologne Afrikanum, and the Social Training Institute at Nyegezi (Tanzania).²²²

The background to these projects of Gypkens was the spectacular reconstruction of post-war Germany and the so-called German "economic miracle". The economic recovery was largely due to the abolition of Nazi price controls and the reform of the German currency. More money was available and a premium was placed on gainful employment. The city centres that had been massively destroyed in the war had now been imaginatively rebuilt and modernized. Gypkens reflected the imagination and daring of those who brought about the reconstruction. He was enthusiastic about the latest technology and tended to be scornful of those in the Society who feared or mistrusted the new techniques.²²³ He believed, probably correctly, that a majority in the German Province shared his outlooks and supported his projects.

220 Impression gained by Patrick Fitzgerald (1925-), interview March 4th 2012.

221 PE 514, April 1961, pp.212-215.

222 Ibid., pp.216-217.

223 Interview with Patrick Fitzgerald (1925-), March 4th 2012.

The Sono-Viso apparatus was a slide projector with tape recorded commentary, intended for catechetical purposes.²²⁴ In the field of audio-visual equipment it was ahead of its day. The user could provide his or her own diapositives and sound commentary suited to a particular audience. Missionaries who have used it are unanimous in their praise.²²⁵ Gypkens' project aimed to produce Sono-Viso sets on a large scale and make them available to mission countries. The owner of the project was a committee called Fôrerungsgesellschaft ("Forwarding Company"), of which Gypkens was co-director. The committee was to commission the manufacture of the sets and the German Province was to supply tapes and slides. In 1964 Gypkens signed a very large contract, on behalf of the committee, with SABA, a German electronics manufacturer at Baden-Wurtemberg, for 10,000 sets. The committee was to pay for these materials, but it was up to the German Province to find buyers in missionary countries. This dubious arrangement, when it became known, led to the suspicion that the committee was merely a cover for the province. The contract stipulated that the apparatus could not be sold in Europe. All these developments took place without any reference to the General Council of the Missionaries of Africa in Rome.

Meanwhile, rumours were reaching the Generalate which suggested that the Sono-Viso scheme was seriously out of hand, and at this very juncture Gypkens replaced the German provincial treasurer. Questions raised by the Bursar General and visits by him to Frankfurt revealed a tangle of contradictions and mutual accusations. Some of the Sono-Viso sets had been distributed to German parishes in exchange for a donation of DM 600 in order to give sets to Africa²²⁶; the original contract had been annulled for legal reasons and the province was now liable for payment to SABA. Without authorization from the Generalate, Gypkens raised a loan from German banks of four million Deutsche marks to pay SABA, and also make a profitable investment in Switzerland on the side. Although he could not find anyone else to put up the needed money for Sono Viso, Gypkens believed it was a unique opportunity

224 This account is based on AGMAfr 626291, 626295, and the personal dossier of Gypkens.

225 Interviews with Detlef Bartsch and Richard Kinlen January/March 2012.

226 Information from Fritz Stenger, cf. Letter of F. Richard December 10th 2012.

that should not be missed. SABA continued to turn out sets of unsaleable apparatus and the German Province was falling ever more deeply into debt. The debt was finally estimated at about DM seven million (in 1965 worth 1.75 million U.S. Dollars; today worth between ten and eleven million U.S. Dollars).²²⁷ No doubt Gypkens was used to handling large sums of money, but in this case his financing plan was seriously wanting. It would seem that not enough effort had been made to identify potential markets in the Third World or to find donors in Europe.

The General Council considered the matter in November 1965. It noted that Gypkens had accepted responsibility for the situation and that, in the circumstances, he could not remain provincial. He had raised enormous loans without authorization and had not been open about the situation. On November 15th he was relieved of his responsibilities as provincial and Johannes Steinkamp (1908-1981) was appointed in his place.²²⁸ Gypkens was invited to Rome to discuss his future. His removal as provincial was an enormous shock for Gypkens himself.²²⁹ Volker's first thought was to propose his appointment as Secretary general of the newly created Lumen Gentium Centre for the Study of the Second Vatican Council in Louvain. He had a five hour meeting with Gypkens at Munich in April 1966, but the ex-provincial refused the *Lumen Gentium* appointment and, in a painful letter to Volker, asked leave in May to look for a diocese.²³⁰ In October 1967, Gypkens wrote to the new Superior General, Théo van Asten, expressing his intention not to return to the Society. Van Asten appreciated his lack of bitterness and thanked him for all he had done for the Society and its work.²³¹

Obviously, there was an urgent need to limit the damage arising from the whole affair. There were several inter-related issues. Not only did the debt have to be repaid, but the future of the Sono-Viso project had to be

227 AGMAfr Générai Council Minutes, November 8th 1965, pp. 180-181; January 7th/8th 1966, pp.5-7.

228 AGMAfr Générai Council Minutes November 15th 1965, p. 182.

229 AGMAfr 624696 Steinkamp to Cauwe December 24th 1965.

230 AGMAfr Casier 379/5, 1967 Générai Chapter Minutes, Vol.1, p.67. Gypkens was incardinated in the diocèse of Fulda. Cf, Minutes of Générai Council, p.76, October 3rd 1966.

231 Gypkens, Personal Dossier, van Asten to Gypkens October 9th 1967.

decided. Last, but not least, an understandable backlash from the German Province was not only possible, but very likely. The indebtedness of the German Province was a grave financial embarrassment for the whole Society. It endangered the future of the Cologne Afrikanum, as well as other projects that relied on German money, such as the Nyegezi Social Training Institute and the Claver House course. A special commission on financial problems, especially those of the German Province, met in Rome from October 17th to 29th 1966, and drew up proposals for submission to the 1967 General Chapter.²³² Among these was the request that serious efforts be made to find funding elsewhere for African social training centres jeopardized by the financial situation of the German Province.²³³

The General Council immediately placed DM one million at the disposal of the German Province and other European provinces were asked for loans. It was also decided to recover the money invested in Switzerland.²³⁴ It was even suggested, as a counsel of despair that the newly constructed Afrikanum at Cologne should be put up for sale.²³⁵ This did not happen, nor was the proposal accepted that it should become the responsibility of the Generalate in Rome.²³⁶ Instead, it was placed under a Committee of Direction in the German Province, with financial help from MISSIO Aachen and MISSIO Munich.

Volker pledged his continued support for the Sono-Viso project in December 1965.²³⁷ The material held by the German Province was worth DM 1.4 million in early 1966, and the SABA factory was continuing to manufacture the apparatus in accordance with the existing contract at a rate of 2,000 units per month.²³⁸ In the end, Steinkamp arranged a deal with the Essen branch of Adveniat, the Catholic Fund for South America. In the autumn of 1966 Adveniat agreed to buy all the

232 PE 573, December 1966, pp.498-499.

233 AGMAfr Casier 380 (7), Documents in préparation for 1967 Chapter.

234 AGMAfr Minutes of Général Council, pp.5-7, January 7th/8th.

235 Ibid.

236 AGMAfr Minutes of Général Council, pp.35-38, April 2nd 1966.

237 AGMAfr 626300, Volker to Hirmer, December 22nd 1965.

238 AGMAfr Minutes of General Council, pp.5-7, January 7th/8th 1966; AGMAfr 626291 v.d.Meeren.

remaining Sono-Viso equipment (4,300 units plus the remaining slides) for DM two million. This marked the final repayment of the debt.²³⁹

The expected backlash was not long in coming. Support for Gypkens in the German Province was strong. In November 1965, shortly after Gypkens was removed from office, the Superior Général received a request to visit the German Province. Volker had no objection, as long as the invitation came from the new provincial Johannes Steinkamp.²⁴⁰ In fact, with the Chapter looming, with a journey to Ethiopia in 1966 and with his continued ill health, Volker did not manage to go to Germany. Steinkamp, as provincial, was due to attend the Chapter *ex officio*. In addition, the German Province elected Alfons Wehmeyer (1913-1999) as its chapter delegate. It was rumoured that a majority of votes had been cast for Gypkens, but these were set aside, on the grounds that Volker would have annulled the vote anyway.

An unofficial open letter, dated October 30th 1966 was addressed to the General Chapter of 1967, with a copy for each individual capitulant. It complained that Gypkens had been defamed by Father Volker and the General Council and that he should be rehabilitated. It also claimed that Wehmeyer had been invalidly elected. In a further letter to the capitulants, dated April 25th 1967, it was requested that the reason for Gypkens' removal be given and claimed that Wehmeyer was not the province's elected spokesman at the Chapter.

An open letter is a public document and, since it questioned both the authority of the Superior General and the German Provincial, it was taken seriously by the Chapter. A lengthy discussion took place in the General Assembly about the government of the Society and the nature of capitular elections.²⁴¹ On May 20th the Assembly voted that the Chapter's Central Commission should respond to the letters from Germany. Volker was asked to read the Commission's report to the Assembly.²⁴² The report stated that so far from being an error, the change of provincial was justi-

239 AGMAfr 624737 Steinkamp to Volker October 4th 1966.

240 Letter of Früh to the 1967 Chapter, Gypkens, Personal Dossier.

241 This account of the debate on the so-called German "affair" is taken from AGMAfr Minutes of 1st Session, 1967 Chapter, Vol.1, Casier 379/5 pp.49-71.

242 Patrick Fitzgerald, who was a member of the Central Commission, supplied further information on March 4th 2012.

fied and was indeed a "grave duty" for the General Council. This was because of the seriousness of the financial irregularity involved and the grave loss of confidence that resulted. The report affirmed that Father Volker and his assistants had always been completely discreet and had consistently tried to save Gypkens' reputation, although serious accusations were made against them. If any disclosure had been made, it was contrary to their wishes and intentions. The Commission verified the election procedure and concluded that Wehmeyer was the validly elected Chapter delegate of Germany. The letter, signed by the six members of the Chapter's Central Commission, asked that these conclusions be humbly accepted.

An eventual response to the letter from the Chapter dated June 2nd 1967 reached van Asten after his election.²⁴³ It rejected the Chapter's conclusions and asked that Gypkens be called to the Chapter to defend himself. If this had happened, it would certainly have prolonged the whole debate on the "German affair" and distracted the Chapter even more from its main task of carrying out the renewal of the Society. Van Asten asked capitulants not to answer this letter. He would himself go to Germany and try to bring about peace and reconciliation.²⁴⁴

It is difficult not to agree that Volker and his assistants acted correctly in the Sono-Viso affair. They were eminently discreet, but silence can provoke suspicions and insinuations in the minds of others. Would more have been gained by being completely transparent? Probably not. It is the classic dilemma of the Superior, who handles an awkward case, involving the reputation of a confrere.

Volker's Final Years

This is not the place to give an account of the 1967 Renewal Chapter. However, when it was over, Volker took up the vacancy left by his friend Antoon Wouters at Geneva. His state of health did not permit him to return to Africa. His work at Geneva was one of co-ordinating aspects of the work of international organizations through the Information Centre of Catholic International Organizations.²⁴⁵ More to the point, he

243 Letter to van Asten June 2nd 1967. AGMAfr Personal Dossier of Gypkens.

244 AGMAfr Casier 379/5, G nerai Chapter Minutes Vol. 1, p. 140.

245 Notes on Volker's final years are based on Fr. L o Volker, pp.26-29.

made a number of ecumenical contacts, especially the Christian Medical Commission and the Lutheran World Federation.

Finding his upstairs apartment too lonely, Volker arranged to stay at a student hostel run by the Augustinians. Accompanying a disabled Viet Nameese student driver, Volker was involved in a fatal accident on the Geneva-Lausanne road, on Easter Wednesday, April 1st 1970. He was killed outright and the driver and his girl-friend were also killed. Volker was aged 64.

1957-1967 were years of crucial change and unforgettable experience for the Missionaries of Africa. The Society was fortunate to have at its head, during that time, a man who was ready to listen to the new ideas of Vatican II, who was able to read the signs of the times and who was also a man of solid, if traditional, piety. In these respects perhaps, he resembled John XXIII, the ultimate architect of aggiornamento.



Missionaries of Africa Bishops who attended Vatican Council II

Superior General: Fr. Léo Volker

Residential Archbishops

Mgr GRAULS, Gitega, Burundi
Mgr KIWANUKA, Rubaga, Uganda
Mgr PERRAUDIN, Kabgayi, Rwanda
Mgr VAN STEENE, Bukavu, Congo
Mgr ZOUNGRANA, Ouagadougou, Upper Volta
Mgr LECLERC, Ségou, Mali

Titular Archbishops

Mgr BRONSVELD ex Tabora, Tanganyika
Mgr CABAN A ex Rubaga, Ouganda
Mgr SOCQUET ex Ouagadougou, Haute Volta

Residential Bishops

Mgr BERTRAND, Navrongo, Ghana
Mgr BLOMJOUS, Mwanza, Tanganyika
Mgr BRETAULT, Koudougou, Upper Volta
Mgr CHAMPAGNE, Tamale, Ghana
Mgr COURTEMANCHE, Fort-Jameson, Northern Rhodesia
Mgr COURTOIS, Kayes, Mali
Mgr DAUBEGHIES, Kasama, Northern Rhodesia
Mgr de MONTCLOS, Sikasso, Mali
Mgr DUPONT, Bobo-Dioulasso, Upper Volta
Mgr DURRIEU, Ouahigouya, Upper Volta
Mgr FADY, Lilongwe, Malawi
Mgr FURSTENBERQ Abercorn, Northern Rhodesia
Mgr JOBIDON, Mzuzu, Malawi
Mgr LANCTOT, Rulenge, Tanganyika
Mgr LESOURD, Nouna, Upper Volta
Mgr MAILLAT, Nzerekore, Guinea

Mgr MAKARAKIZA, Ngozi, Burundi
Mgr MARTIN, Bururi, Burundi
Mgr McCOY, Oyo, Nigeria
Mgr MERCIER, Laghouat, Algeria
Mgr MORLION, Baudouinville, Congo
Mgr OGEZ, Mbarara, Uganda
Mgr PAILLOUX, Fort Rosebery, Northern Rhodesia
Mgr SIEDLE, Kigoma, Tanganyika
Mgr VAN OORSCHOT, Mbeya, Tanganyika

Titular Bishops

Mgr CLEIRE Mgr	ex Kasongo, Congo
GEERAERTS MGR	ex Castermansville, Congo
MOLIN Mgr ROY	ex Bamako, Mali
Mgr TRUDEL Mgr	ex Chilubula, Rhodésie du Nord
VAN S AMBEEK Mgr	ex Tabora, Tanganyika
WALSH	ex Kigoma, Tanganyika
	ex Aberdeen, Ecosse

Apostolic Prefect

Mgr LANDRU René
ex Mopti, Mali

Dates of Independence of African Countries during Léo Volker's mandate

6th March 1957: GHANA
2nd October 1958 : GUINEA
30th June 1960 : DR CONGO
5th August 1960 : UPPER VOLTA
7th August 1960 : IVORY COAST
20th August 1960 : SENEGAL
22nd September 1960 : MALI
1st October 1960 : NIGERIA
9th December. 1961 : TANGANYIKA
1st July 1962: RWANDA
1st July 1962: BURUNDI
3rd July 1962: ALGERIA
9th October 1962 : UGANDA
12th December 1963 : KENYA
24th April 1964 : TANZANIA
6th July 1964: MALAWI
24th October 1964 : ZAMBIA

Confreres who died a violent death between 1957 et 1967

Name	Nationality	Date		Country	Died in
De Vos Renaat	Belgian			1 Congo	
6/02/1961			Bukavu Stabbed by Lumumbists		
Py Paul	French	05/10/1962	St Cyprien/Attafs		Algeria
			Kidnapped from the house and killed on the road		
Chassine Bernard	French	05/10/1962	St Cyprien/Attafs		Algeria
			Kidnapped from the house and killed on the road		
Lenaers Constant	Belgian	11/08/1964	Kalemie		Congo
			Killed by rebels		
Stove Gaston	Belgian	11/08/1964	Kalemie		Congo
			Killed by rebels		
Coninx Laurent	Belgian	27/11/1964	Aba		Congo
			Tortured and murdered by the Simbas rebels		
D'Hoore Paul	Belgian	27/11/1964	Aba		Congo
			Tortured and murdered by the Simbas rebels		
Verlinden Albert	Belgian	27/11/1964	Aba		Congo
			Tortured and murdered by the Simbas rebels		
Pauwelijn Karel	Belgian	27/11/1964	Aba		Congo
			Tortured and murdered by the Simbas rebels		
Leys Paul	Belgian	27/11/1964	Aba		Congo
			Tortured and murdered by the Simbas rebels		
De Meyer Léo	Belgian	27/11/1964	Aba		Congo
			Tortured and murdered by the Simbas rebels		
Pauwelijn Eugène	Belgian	01/12/1964	Bunia		Congo
			Murdered by the Simbas rebels		
De Meyer Piet	Belgian	01/12/1964	Bunia		Congo
			Murdered by the Simbas rebels		
Smissaert Louis	Belgian	01/12/1964	Bunia		Congo
			Murdered by the Simbas rebels		

Extracts from the letters of Father Léo Volker

Fr. Léo Volker directed the Society in an age of far-reaching change: Many countries achieved independence and some of them suffered from cruel wars. The Church experienced the era of the Council and the development of local hierarchies. Young missionaries were coming from a world searching for new values and new cultures. Communism was spreading. Fr. Volker was aware of the necessity of directing the Society towards radical transformation while at the same time remaining faithful to its proper charism. In order to do this, he used his pen a lot. In 10 years he wrote 70 letters. We thought it would be useful to publish some extracts from these letters as a complement to his biography written by A. Shorter. We hope that these texts will help us to better understand Fr. Léon Volker and his time.

François Richard, Archivist

June 1960: The New Role of the Society in the African Church

Up to now the missionaries were responsible for the mission. What will their role be in a Church where those in charge will not be members of our Society?

... Our predecessors laboured in those parts of Africa entrusted to our Society. They sowed; and we, who follow in their footsteps, are already witnessing the ripening of the harvest, and indeed we can already gather numerous fruit from their labours. Recently we had the joy of seeing the elevation of His Eminence Cardinal Rugambwa. These last few days, we have seen African Bishops chosen by the Holy Father to be placed at the head of new dioceses, or to continue the work of the Church in dioceses already established...

These joyful promotions set once more before our eyes the role that we, as missionaries, must play in the Church: our role is that of pioneers,

of those who open up the way : our duty is to plant the Church, to raise up a local Church, a living Christian community from the African peoples, and directed by a hierarchy and a clergy drawn from its own ranks. That is our role, stirring but exacting. The joy derived from these latest decisions of the Holy Father must not cause us to forget the lessons of Holy Week. No life without death, no redemption without suffering. Before we have a fertile soil, how many plants must be buried before the land is really productive. This image reveals our place in the Church of Africa. If, thanks be to God, we can already see the fruit of our missionary activity we must not forget that our task is to prepare, to build up: a long, obscure work, full of sacrifices, as indeed any work of foundation.

I should like to come back once more on this important subject and you will readily forgive me, I am sure. We must often meditate on our true role in the Church of Africa. We are at its service, entirely at its service. We are part of it, not to occupy the first place, but as the faithful servant who asks nothing more than to work and become redundant after having formed those who will assume full responsibility of the Christian community.

The past may deceive us. In a new-born Church, everything must be done: with so much to be done, we must deputize in many roles. But bear it in mind that these are only temporary roles. Perhaps we show a lot of devotedness, perhaps God gives us success, but that is not enough. Have we thought of preparing someone to take our place, chosen from the people of the dioceses entrusted to our care. This solicitude of providing for successors must pursue us incessantly, and in all domains, more especially those concerning the clergy of all ranks and the religious congregations. Solicitude for vocations, solicitude in their formation, solicitude in handing over responsibility to Africans whom we have prepared in this way.

It may well pain us to give up certain tasks into which we have poured the best of ourselves. Such is the sacrifice asked of the missionary, but a sacrifice which it is sweet to make since it marks the coming of age of the new African Church. Anyone who could not agree to such a sacrifice is much to be pitied, for thus he would show that he did not understand the true meaning of his vocation.

The progress of the Church in Africa brings us to another kind of service. If we are to have less responsibility in the running of the diocese, we have however to work there, but now more and more under the direction of the new African Bishops, whom the Holy See has placed at the head of ecclesiastical jurisdictions. Serve in humility; such must be the basis of our attitude henceforth. Serve with devotedness with disinterestedness, in subordination and in a spirit of obedience to the directives of the Hierarchy.

That is the attitude of our Society. It tries to be at the beck and call of the Bishops of Africa. It only accepts work at the request or with the approbation of the Ordinaries. In like manner, each of you will have to carry out your apostolic activity in complete submission to your Bishop, the authentic representative of Christ in the country where you are labouring. It is only on this condition that we can continue to work and count on God's blessing.

January 1962: Conditions for Adapting to the Modern World Fidelity and Openness

Fr. Volker saw very clearly the double danger which lay in wait for his confreres: Some would be trapped into a paralysing conservatism while others, on the contrary, would be tempted to abandon all their traditions. He invites all of them to an openness in fidelity and unity to discern the future ways according to the heart of God

.. .We must constantly renew our surrender of self to God. We gave ourselves to Him officially, so to speak, the day we took the Oath; but we must renew this oblation of ourselves every day in all our activities, trying to render it ever purer and more complete. If this oblation is made through Christ and in Christ, our union with Him will become closer, and it will have a double fruit for the work He has confided to us. Offering ourselves completely to God we shall find the secret of true adaptation and also that unity which makes the Church manifest in the eyes of all.

If we are closely united to Christ we shall find it easy to do His work in the world according to His intentions and following His methods.

Like Him we shall belong entirely to those He has confided to us, and we shall be able to verify in our own lives the words of St Paul, the model of apostles: "Omnia omnibus factus sum", and answer the call and imitate the example of Our Lord to the full. Thus in our apostolic activity will be found real adaptation and at the same time a closer union with Christ, come what may.

Thus understood, adaptation in the work of the apostolate will avoid two dangers always to be feared and today more than ever. To use the political jargon in vogue, one may say there is a danger of moving too much to the left or too much to the right.

Danger of moving too much to the left - under the pretext of the work to be done, of being everything to ail men, of obtaining better results, some would like to bypass our rules, our community, our work in common, our spiritual exercises done together, the obedience due to religious and ecclesiastical superiors, ail the means willed by God that we may be truly united to Him through Christ and that we may accomplish His work. The danger would then arise of our no longer being the salt of the earth, the light of the world; of our being not only in the world and for the world but also "of ' the world. Under the pretext of the apostolate we should then become men of the world and therefore inapt for the work of the apostolate.

Danger of moving too much to the right - through adherence to formulas lacking in suppleness and to exterior details, through unwillingness to change our ways of working, whether it be question of traditions or of methods of apostolate. This would be to make the organisation of the Society an end in itself, which would lead to isolationism, community chauvinism, immobility and the cult of tradition for its own sake.

Real adaptation to new circumstances, on the contrary, supposes perfect fidelity to ail the Society means: its spirit, organisation, rules, the essential of its traditions, and at the same time an open-mindedness and a suppleness that makes us always fit to accomplish the work that God assigned to the Society.

This adaptation, made of constant open-mindedness, will make it possible for us to maintain among ourselves, with other priests, with re-

ligious and with laymen, that unity for which Our Lord prayed before His death: "Ut omnes unum sint".

Several times already I have said that the greatest danger for the Church in Africa is not the enemies coming from outside but division inside it. There has never been a split in the Church, division or schism, without bishops and priests being the cause of it or responsible for it to some extent.

In answer to the prayer of Christ we must bring about, not unity among classes of people, not national or political unity, but unity in the Church, in the priesthood and in the apostolate.

Doubtless this is not easy, for there are always differences of origin, of methods of work, of character, some being progressive by temperament, others conservative. Positive effort is therefore needed, together with the grace of God, to achieve this unity, but we may count on the help of the Holy Ghost Whom Christ promised to His apostles.

We shall put ourselves in the right dispositions to receive His help if we practise humility, recognising that we are instruments of a priesthood far above us. We shall secure it also by practising obedience, submitting ourselves to all authority; in which we see God represented.

This instinct for unity, far from shutting up the priest within the narrow confines of his religious community and of " his " flock, makes him accessible to all souls and truly a missionary, and that so much the more through his having made his community truly united and apostolic by the manifestation of his interior charity: "See how they love one another".

March 1962: Confronted by the Massacres of Missionaries

During his mandate, 15 confreres suffered violent deaths in Algeria and the Congo. Others were kidnapped and many had to flee or hide themselves. Fr. Volker has to comfort his confreres and to invite them to live out these events in a spirit of faith.

During the first month of this year we have already had many moments of pain and anxiety... it was with stupor that we received news

of the massacre of the missionaries at Kongolo, Katanga. Afterwards we were very worried about our confreres of the mission posts in the north of Katanga and in the south of Kivu... These events, coupled with the absence of security that they suppose, must make us think. Let us try to derive from them all the fruits that Our Lord intends us to do. For if our Divine Master allows trials and sufferings to come upon us, it is for the good of the Church and for our own personal advantage also...

The African Church is still in its youth and has to pass through the crucible of suffering to reach maturity. In the modern world, Africa is now assuming a place of particular importance. In Africa a new world is being born which will have a great role to play. It is not at all surprising, therefore, that the forces of good and evil are at grips with each other, Africa being in the balance. Which will triumph? Will it be Christ or Satan? To a big extent, that will depend on us., on our generosity and our sanctity, for, as Missionaries of Africa, we also have a part of the first importance to play in the moulding of this new world...

.. .The trials of the present time also contribute to our own personal good, for they oblige us to take our stand firmly on the supernatural motives of hope. Faced with difficulties which perhaps will prove still greater than those we have already come up against, let us remember that a grain of wheat must fall to the ground and die, or else it remains nothing more than a grain of wheat. Our Lord has solemnly promised that the gates of hell shall not prevail against His Church, of which we are the servants. We believe in the Church and in her future, and this faith is the foundation of our hope. But it is not established on the success of spectacular undertakings; just the contrary. We believe that difficulties, sufferings and failures hold the promise of greater, of more far reaching victories, of true victories, of victories not merely apparent but deep in the souls of men.

My dear confreres, these reflections bring home to us more than ever our obligation to live supernaturally. A supernatural spirit alone is able to sustain us in certain particularly painful circumstances; in any case this spirit alone makes us true disciples of Christ. Let us therefore have a deep interior life taking its source in the contemplation of the infinite riches of the Sacred Heart of Jésus, and we shall not fall short of the task

that is ours. The conclusion of the preceding is, of course, that fruitfulness in the apostolate is the effect of holiness and union with God rather than of the multiplicity of apostolic undertakings and the importance of the offices one fills, conclusion which is not new, but which is verified here once again.

The realisation of this fact must bring us to ask ourselves whether in our daily conduct, in our way of speaking and acting, in our obedience in practice, in the use of the means of sanctification, we are faithful to the recommendation of Bishop Livinhac who pointed out that one of the characteristics of the true White Father is the particular care he has to sustain his interior life while engaged in the work of the apostolate. It is only by living truly and intensely our life of union to Christ that we shall have the spirit of faith more than ever necessary for us to be missionaries at the height of our sublime vocation...

July 1962: The Duty of Ongoing Formation

Fr. Volker was convinced that in order to cope with new situations, it was neither possible to rely on old formulae nor to improvise by adopting quick and facile solutions. Thus the primary duty to continue to educate oneself and to keep up to date on the new currents in Theology Exegesis and Sociology.

You will agree that our times give rise to many difficult problems and that, if we are to keep on the right course, the one Our Lord would have us follow, it is highly important for us to be right minded and clear sighted. So here we have yet another reason, and a very special one, for being convinced that study and personal reflection with regard to everything directly or indirectly touching the spiritual life and the work of the apostolate is indeed necessary...

Doubtless, generally speaking we are full of zeal and devotedness in the apostolic ministry. But is it not true also to say that often our work is not what it ought to be because, through lack of study and careful thought, our efforts are dispersed, with the result that our work is lacking in depth? The fact is that there are many who, while not shrinking from physical and

corporal fatigue, even tiring themselves overmuch sometimes in manual and pastoral work, nevertheless do not make sufficient mental effort. The work they do is usually useful and even necessary, but in itself it is insufficient, and sometimes there is even the risk of it becoming useless or badly done through lack of study and reflection...

If we have the courage to seek with sincerity the reasons for our neglect in this matter, we have to admit they are often worthless and even discreditable to us.

All those engaged in really personal intellectual work are in the position to say that, for most, physical activity is much easier. And in fact all personal work of an intellectual kind calls for serious effort: in the first place the effort needed simply to make a start is in itself sometimes long drawn out and laborious; then there is the effort required to achieve some kind of result, calling for much more time and pains. It is doubtless for this reason that so often, instinctively so to speak, we seek exterior occupations and throw ourselves into them body and soul, thus creating a pretext for our neglect of the harder work of the mind. Of course this attitude is for many of us an unconscious one; nevertheless it remains true that this intellectual laziness... the name we must give it... is very harmful both to the spiritual life and the apostolate.

I do not want to say that laziness is the only cause of the neglect of the duty of study. In many cases there really is an abundance of pastoral and other work to be done. Our lives are often filled to overflowing with a thousand and one things, and we go from one task to another without even the time to sit down for a few minutes of reflection and study. ... This dispersal of energy due to the multiplicity and variety of our occupations may well take from us all taste for intellectual work: in the free moments that come our way in all this bustle we hardly feel inclined to sit down at our desks and apply ourselves to serious study. That indeed supposes considerable strength of character! And yet we must have it, because it is required by our vocation and will help us to be at the height of our apostolic ideal...

Numberless are the current publications on Holy Scripture, the methods of apostolate, catechetical instruction, the pastoral side of the litur-

gy, etc. It is our duty to follow the trends of thought they represent so as to better plan our apostolic activity. We may, moreover, rightly suppose that the influence of the Holy Spirit is for something in the appearance within the Church of such trends...

If the work of the apostolate is so abundant that there is risk of our neglecting this duty, it would doubtless be best to reserve for ourselves, to impose on ourselves at whatever the cost, several hours of serious study each week. It is certainly not too much. In our work as a whole there are certainly less important and less urgent tasks that we can leave aside or postpone in order to be faithful to study, and thus render our life richer and more fruitful.

You must all take a few hours each week so as to be able to read each year a few books connected nearly or remotely with your priestly or spiritual life, even though they may not have an immediately practical purpose. I have in mind in the first place, of course, books dealing with the various branches of ecclesiastical knowledge, but I am thinking also of books concerning other useful matters, for example the social problems which are so important these days. Great indeed is the advantage to be derived from the regular study... I do not say the rapid perusal... of the articles of a serious review.

Intellectual activity of this kind would of itself give a new fruitfulness to your whole apostolate and lift it to a higher level...

February 1963: The Soul of the Society

Although he was convinced of the need for renewal, Fr. Volker was obsessed by the imperative for the Society to remain faithful to the teachings of Cardinal Lavignerie and Bishop Livinhac. He liked to repeat that one should not allow oneself be absorbed by what is provisional and accidental but to return to what is the soul of the Society.

... What then is the spirit by which we must live? Evidently it is an apostolic spirit, since the Society exists for the purpose of spreading the Gospel; if her spirit were not apostolic, she could not achieve the object

for which she was founded. But, we may ask further, in what does this apostolic spirit consist, and what means does the Society use to inculcate it? Our Society, like every created thing, must tend towards the fulfilment of the mission she has received from Almighty God. She has been "sent" by the Church, and thus by Our Lord Himself, to continue the work which He began while on earth, namely, the establishment of the Kingdom of God in the souls of men, both individually and in society. She does this by a series of external activities performed according to the will of God and in close union with Him.

How can they hear if there is no preacher asked St Paul in Ro. 10,14. The apostle has to preach, he must announce the Good News. This involves a number of tasks: the ground must first be prepared, and then planted, and finally tended if it is to produce the hoped-for fruits. In practice this means that the apostle must carry out every operation involved in this process, whether its connection with the conversion and salvation of mankind be direct or indirect. We know by experience what this means. It can mean work of almost any description, from the administration of the Sacraments to the most humble toil. Whatever his particular role may be, the apostle must seek to fill it as perfectly as possible. If God's work is to progress the apostle must give himself generously to these multifarious duties, be they directly religious, or intellectual, or administrative, or manual labour.

However to work is not enough of itself; in addition the work must be done in union with Christ. The apostle's work is essentially supernatural, both in its object and in the means it employs. Its object is supernatural, being nothing else than the continuation of the work of Christ Himself, whose whole will was bent towards procuring the glory of His Heavenly Father through making men holy. The means also which the apostle uses are supernatural, since the exterior activity he undertakes to achieve his object will be effective only if the work is carried out according to the will of God and in union with Christ.

The theory is plain enough; it is when we get down to practicing that the difficulties begin, as we all know from experience. If our activity is to be genuinely apostolic activity, it must spring from a deep interior

life: it must be as it were a continuation of the love of Christ Himself for men and for God. The charity of Christ is urging us on. There are two complementary truths to be borne in mind: firstly, that any kind of activity can become apostolic activity if performed with love, and therefore in union with Christ; and, secondly, that even the most spiritual work will be barren of result unless it issues from the same supernatural source. That is why our Society has always insisted so much on the special care to keep intact the precious treasure of the interior life in the midst of the work of the apostolate.

Once we have really grasped the vital necessity of holiness for an apostle, we will have no difficulty in understanding why Cardinal Lavigerie began his "Instructions to the First Missionaries of Central Africa" by emphasising precisely this point: "I begin, he tells them, as is natural, by speaking to you of the spiritual dispositions which must always be yours, because on this absolutely everything depends: you will not convert or sanctify anyone if you do not make it y our first task to work with courage at your own sanctification..."

Our life must be directed towards a twofold aim, towards our own sanctification and towards the sanctification of the souls entrusted to us. But that does not mean that we lead a double life, as if there were two distinct departments in our lives, the life of prayer and the life of work. No, the idea that a missionary is like a battery, alternately being charged in prayer and then discharging in activity, is surely a deplorable error. Ail our life must be a life of prayer. You must pray always. But while praying we accomplish our apostolic mission quite as much as when we work.

We will never realise this ideal unless we are truly convinced, and keep always before our minds, this fundamental truth that in our work it is really God Himself who works, using us to bring about the redemption of mankind. The practical realisation of this truth demands of us a great spirit of faith, so that we live habitually in the atmosphere of the supernatural; without such realisation, the life-giving soul of our apostolate is no longer there, and for all our outward activity we are no more than sounding brass or clanging cymbals (ICo 13, 1...)

November 1963: Explanation of his Speech at the Vatican Council

From its second session, Fr. Volker was a member of the Council. He took an active part in its work especially in what concerned the mission. In the month of November he gave a speech in which he emphasised, loud and clear the specificity of the missionary vocation. He took care to explain himself to the confreres.

My intervention was intended to bring out a deficiency in Chapter Four of the schema "*De Ecclesia*", where there is mention of priestly sanctity, of the sanctity of religious and of the sanctity of the laity. It seemed to me that the text should also have spoken of the characteristics of the type of sanctity demanded by the missionary life. I therefore showed first that the missionary life is a special vocation, willed by God and enriched with particular spiritual gifts. In calling us to the missionary life, Almighty God invites us to a complete and final dedication to the work of evangelization, in order that Christ may be preached among non-Christians and the Church planted in those places where she does not yet exist. Such a work requires that we offer to God all our being and all our activity, not for a certain time, but for ever.

This is what it means to be a missionary, this constitutes the grandeur of our vocation. Fundamentally it involves an act of intense love for God and for the Church, inspired by the Spirit of Holiness; this act establishes us in a particular kind of Christian life which we may call the apostolic state. For us White Fathers, the act of dedication is expressed in the first part of our oath, where we consecrate ourselves until death to the work of the African missions, according to the Constitutions of the Society; we are thus settled in that form of the apostolic life which is peculiar to White Fathers, and hence in the second part of the oath we promise and swear obedience in all that concerns the practice of apostolic zeal and community life.

I would like you to meditate carefully on the meaning of this consecration. It is a real "setting apart" for the work of evangelization, just as, in the Acts of the Apostles, the Holy Spirit enjoined the Church at Antioch "to separate Paul and Barnabas for the work to which He had called

them" (Ac. 13, 2). In his epistle to the Galatians, St Paul throws a vivid light on this missionary vocation to unbelievers when he writes: "*He who had set me apart from the day of my birth and called me by his grace, saw fit to make his Son known in me, so that I could preach his gospel among the Gentiles*" (Gal. 1, 15). He goes on to narrate how, without consulting any human creature, he followed this call and spared no effort to be faithful to it. Fourteen years later he returned to Jerusalem, and the other Apostles recognized the grace which had been given to him and to Barnabas, for "*he whose power had enable Peter to become the apostle of the circumcised, had enabled me to become the apostle of he Gentiles*" (Gal. 2, 8).

This same call has been addressed to us, a call to consecrate ourselves wholly to God, with no restrictions as to time or to the kind of service required of us. Our vocation involves committing ourselves to tend towards perfection and to practise ail the virtues of an apostle, especially the virtue of zeal. It is indeed necessary to lay down in précise terms what it is to which we are committing ourselves, and the kind of life to which we are binding ourselves, and this the *Constitutions* do. But these juridical definitions can cover only our minimum obligations, those to which we must be faithful if we are not to be guilty of betraying our word. Anyone of us who wished to content himself with this minimum would show that he had failed to understand the obligation, which is inherent in our vocation, of tending towards perfection in giving ourselves wholly to our calling. Far from contenting ourselves with this indispensable minimum, our task is to love God, in Himself and in souls, and to make every effort, cost what it may, to make Him known and loved by other people.

This love of God requires of us an ever more complete sacrifice of ourselves. It was for this reason that our revered Founder said that we must desire and pursue complete holiness with loyalty and courage. To stop tending towards perfection in the apostolic life, to make reservations in the offering we make of ourselves, would amount to denying our vocation. That would bring us, as the Cardinal affirmed, "*to complete perdition, for there is no middle wayfor an apostle: he must choose between complète sanctity, at least desired and pursued with constancy*

and courage, or absolute perversion..."

March 1965: Community Life

Fr. Volker felt very strongly that one of the essential elements, if the society was to survive in the post conciliar era which was just beginning, was a renewed commitment to community life. He published a long document to this effect which aimed at explaining the place of our communities in the service of local Churches.

Our Society is at one and the same time essentially a Missionary Institute and an Institute of the Common Life. It is a Missionary Institute approved as such by the supreme authority of the Church. Consequently, on entering the Society, we missionaries bind ourselves by Oath to the service of the Sovereign Pontiff, Head of the Episcopal College, in view of orientating our whole life in the missionary apostolate. Thus we become the special collaborators of the Episcopal Order for the evangelization of the world.

However, this designation is made not to the individual member but to the Society as a body. For it is only by virtue of belonging to this Institute of the Common Life - and of the Common Life conceived as a state of consecration to the apostolate - that we acquire our special status. In order to grasp this statement we must take note of the two distinct aspects of the term "Common Life".

Firstly it means, in its most obvious sense, community life such as we live it, as prescribed by the Constitutions. It comprises a particular pattern of community of residence, table, prayer and work. It culminates in what we mean by the "rule of three", which is formulated in the Constitutions, and in the concept of work in common conducted under the responsibility of a Superior and, notably, by the local council. We are all aware how highly esteemed this point of our Constitutions has always been in the Society and that it is sacrosanct.

But this form of "community life" does not explain the full content of the "Common Life" which for us is a "consecration to the apostolate" in

accord with a common rule. For if by our Oath we solemnly pledge ourselves to live the Common Life, we do so in order to pursue apostolic sanctity, as the Cardinal intended when he founded the Society. To this we bind ourselves, not only in the sight of God and in our innermost conscience but by a public act, in the sight of the Church. This makes it clear that this form of life of evangelical and apostolic perfection is approved, and even mandated, by the Church, as a symbol and witness of what the Church fundamentally and intimately is, namely, the Kingdom of God on earth, the Life of God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, in men.

This, then, leads us to the second and more fundamental and penetrating meaning of our Common Life: a life in accordance with a common rule in the practice of apostolic perfection. By this life in accordance with a common rule, the Regular Life, under the authority of the Superiors, the Society traces for us the way of our sanctification as apostles. This way is that of the Gospel and its primary law of Charity, lived out in the apostolate and the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience.

This life in accordance with a common rule is therefore very much more than a purely negative safeguard for the virtue of the missionary. It is for us a precise and indisputable means of pursuing the apostolic perfection which must be ours. Our Constitutions say this explicitly: It is in order to obtain more surely this twofold object (personal sanctification and apostolic work) that the Missionaries have adopted the Common Life.

And in order truly to live this Common Life, our Constitutions remind us that the three indispensable means, straight from the Gospel, are the three virtues of poverty, chastity and obedience which are the foundation of the Common Life and give to apostolic life its strength and vigour, and must be carefully cultivated by all who would correspond with the graces and duties of their vocation. Such is the basic meaning of our Common Life. The other meaning, that of "community life", is only an application, the outcome, of the deeper meaning of Common Life.

Thus the full meaning of the Common Life in our Society is: living and working in community, on the basis of our pledge to pursue apostolic sanctity in accordance with a common rule. (This is a definition, incidentally, which answers to man's nature as a social being and is the

reflection in us of the intimate Triune life of God). For us, then, the Common Life, thus defined in the fullest meaning, is the will of the Church, the will of God. Outside of that will there can be for a White Father neither sanctity nor apostolate.

February 1967:

Towards the Chapter of 1967: Report and Prospects

In this letter written at the end of his mandate, Fr. Volker stressed the changes which were turning the world, Africa and the Church upside down. He saw a pressing invitation to a profound aggiornamento in the society and in its members. He saw clearly the problems that would have to be tackled in order to achieve a double fidelity: Fidelity to the charism of the Society and fidelity to the new era that was emerging. He seemed to have a premonition of the upheavals that the society would have to face in the following years. It is a call to vigilance, to trust, and to hope. It is not a question of changing the rules but a conversion of heart.

The beginning of this new year 1967 gives me, for the last time as Superior General, the opportunity to express to all the Confreres my best wishes and the assurance of my prayers which I have so frequently offered to Our Lord during the past ten years. A very sincere "thank you" to all my collaborators for their unfailing devotedness and for their efficient and competent aid during this decade. It has not been of quiet rest, but all of them have greatly facilitated my work. I thank also the Confreres of the Generalate for their willingness and affection which have been most helpful to me.

The year 1967 will be the year of the ordinary General Chapter, and also the Chapter of aggiornamento requested by the Decree *Ecclesiae Sanctae*. This interior renewal is imperative for the Society. New elements of first importance have deeply modified the very ground of our apostolate. With the exception of one territory all the countries where the White Fathers are working have acquired political independence, and the structures of these new States are slowly finding their place. A process of cultural evolution with depth and extension, a modification of social realities, and in some countries a beginning of socialisation give a new face to the civil Society in which we live and work to answer

the call of the Church. A radical change has started. We must try to understand it from inside, and to enter into it without reticence.

Similarly in the ecclesiastical domain we meet with important changes which require adaptation. I am thinking especially of the establishment of the Hierarchy in Africa which is not without influencing our situation. On the other hand the official Acts of the Council affect directly or indirectly the life of the Society, its relations with the Ordinaries and its apostolic activity.

This radical evolution of the civil Society as well as of the Church in Africa has deeply influenced the mentalities, the ways of thinking, acting and being of the people of our time. When the question of updating arises one cannot possibly ignore these elements.

To face these problems and give them a worthy solution, which makes of the White Fathers' Society an apostolic instrument both adapted and efficient, there is no need to cling obstinately to ail the realities of the past and to bar the way to changes. This would be lack of fidelity to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit manifesting Himself everywhere in the Church. And this would mean by the very fact condemning ourselves to sterility and maybe to death.

On the other hand there is no need to throw overboard ail the riches which have given us our true visage in the missionary Church. Destroying is not progressing. It is towards progress, towards renewal that the Church orientates our Society with ail its strength.

These new elements on which we have to concentrate our reflection bring earnestly to our attention the human and evangelical values which must be integrated in our personal way of life and in the apostolic life of the Society.

This discovery leads logically to adaptation. Some could think that these changes are asked for by lack of generosity, which will finally result in softening the Rule; this would mean a devaluation of the very spirit of the Society. On the contrary the providential circumstances in which we are living are an invitation to deepen the meaning of our apos-

tolic consecration, so that we may live up to it in a more conscious and authentic way, precisely through the rich bring-in of those new elements which flow from the evolution of the world and of the Church after the Council. Far from diminishing the traditional apostolic values, these new elements can and should help us to deepen them and to live them in a more generous way.

This does not mean that there will be no difficulties. The real aggiornamento entails development, progress in the traditional line. This progress risks bringing about apparent conflicts, oppositions, needing a clear solution in order to continue peacefully one's way. Some examples? Opposition between fidelity to the apostolic guidelines of the Ecclesiastical Superior and fidelity to the concrete form of our apostolic consecration. The Holy Spirit is acting in ail: both superiors and inferiors. How then to reconcile, in a concrete case, true and generous obedience to a Superior and inspiration to the Holy Spirit? A dialogue must be established between ail the members of the community, frank and simple, to elucidate a problem or a concrete apostolic situation. What is the responsibility of each one, when there is question of a decision to be taken? What is especially the role of the Superior? What is my liberty of judgment in the presence of the decisions of my Superiors? To what extent can I exercise my critical sense? How to reconcile total apostolic responsibility and genuine community life to which I have bound myself by oath?

As a matter of fact, to come to the full realisation of this progress desired by everybody and required by the new circumstances of our apostolic life, it will not be enough for the Chapter to decree some rules, nor to give orientations. The true problem is interior and supposes a re-education for superiors and inferiors, for ancients and young ones. A new mode of being and thinking must sink into our minds; we are to become more grown-up to full size and spiritual strength. True progress must come into being first of ail at that level.

This means that the preparation of the Chapter and the Chapter itself put us in the very heart of our apostolic spiritual life. They require a deep faith in the action of Christ guiding the Church during the realisation of its mission of which we are the instruments. May "the light of faith" enlighten and guide the Capitulants! May it equally enlighten and

guide all the White Fathers! They require also true love, sincere and efficient. It is not the one who says "Lord, Lord", who will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who fulfils the will of my Father in heaven... At this moment so important for the Society we have to find out together what the divine Will is for each one of us, and to help one another to carry it out. They equally require a total availability for the service which the Church expects from us. As a matter of fact, to-day's apostolate has its own requirements, which ask of the missionaries very great sacrifices. The Church must be able to count on us. The Chapter will attain this aim in as far as it shall clearly point out to us what exactly the Church expects of us in Africa in the years to come, and what are the proper means towards this end.

We must all together maintain ourselves in those dispositions to approach together this time of grace of the Chapter. The question is not to be in favour of progress, to be modern without reflecting. Nor is the question to be conservative and traditionalist in principle. The main question is to help one another, in a spirit of deep and active faith, to find out what Christ and the Church expect from our Society during the years to come. There is the criterion of our choice. And this choice has to be passed through the acts of all the degrees of the hierarchy: Superiors and Inferiors, in a spirit of respect, confidence, collaboration, co-responsibility, kindness, friendship and charity as the Pope himself put it last month.

Considering the generosity of all and the general keen interest in preparing the Chapter, I feel greatly confident for the future. But the Chapter will only be a starting point. What is mainly required is our willingness to put these decisions into practice and to live in accordance with its spirit.

Table of Contents

Foreword	3
Volker's Election and Character	5
Africanization and Independence	6
African Bishops between 1957 and 1967	7
The five Diocesan contracts for this period	9
The Dutch Golden Age of Mission	10
Two friends: Léo Volker and Antoon Wouters	11
Josef Blomjous	14
Joop Geerdes	16
Théo van Asten	17
Guy Mosmans	18
Volker's Général Council	21
The Second Vatican Council	26
Volker at the Council	32
Sufferings and Trials	34
Constitutions and Directory	38
Volker in Africa, the African Seminaries, Lay Elites	42
CIPA	44
The Catholic Press in Africa	47
The African Cultural Awakening	50
Recruitment and Formation	52
Fidei Donum Priests	55
What was it like to be a missionary in the fields in 1957-1967?	58
Préparation of the 1967 Chapter	63
The Sono Viso Affair	69
Volker's Final Years	74
Annex	
Missionaries of Africa Bishops who attended Vatican Council II	76
Dates of Independence of African Countries from 1957 to 1967	78
Confreres who died a violent death between 1957 et 1967	79
Extracts from the letters of Father Léo Volker	80

