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DIRECTIVES OF MGR TRUFFET TO HIS MISSIONARIES

We set down below the directives addressed by Mgr Truffet to the Missionaries of the Holy Heart of Mary, dated August 1, 1847. We shall follow this with the presentation of it made by Fr Paul Coulon, C.S.Sp, to the Seminar of Bernard Plongeron, Professor of the Institut Catholique, Paris. This will cast light upon the importance of this document for the appreciation not merely of the missionary doctrine of the first Bishop of the Congregation of the Holy Heart of Mary but also of the thinking of Father Libermann, an approach entirely in harmony with the views of Mgr Truffet.

1. *INSTRUCTIONS OF MGR BENOÎT TRUFFET*, Vicar-Apostolic of the two Guineas, Dakar, 1 August 1847.

Benoît Truffet, by divine mercy and the grace of the Apostolic See Bishop of Callipolis, Vicar Apostolic of the Two Guineas and of Senegambia.

To our dear sons in Jesus Christ, the Missionaries of the Most Holy Heart of Mary, exercising their apostolate in these countries; health and benediction in Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Having invoked the Father of Light through Jesus Christ, Saviour of men and Head of the apostolate; having begged the Mother of mercy to use her powerful mediation with her Divine Son, in favour of the peoples and missionaries that the adorable designs of Providence have specially confided to her Most Holy and Immaculate Heart, face to face with our conscience and our eternity, we have thought it our duty to communicate to you, our dear cooperators, the thoughts and instructions necessary for the future of the mission and the harmonious working of the missionaries. In virtue of the authority vested in us by the Apostolic Letters of November 17, 1846, and of March 1, 1847, we have ordained and do ordain the following:

I. In accordance with the directives of the Holy See, dated November 23, 1845, the Missionaries of the Holy Heart of Mary, wherever it be possible for them to establish themselves, shall strive to gather around them a small group of children destined for the ecclesiastical state. They will ensure they learn the Latin language as well as the *local idiom*. *This study of the two languages will be accompanied by classes of singing and of ceremonies. To this will be joined training in agricultural work, which will prepare these children for their apostolate amongst their compatriots. The missionaries will never allow themselves to forget that they came to Africa to establish the reign of God and the Church, not the ideas nor the customs of Europe.*

II. *Each missionary shall have for his personal use a copy of The Catechism of the Council of Trent: he will make it his handbook, reading it in its entirety every four years, that is, studying one of its four sections each year.*

III. Each one will also have in his possession *the Sacred Scriptures*, or at least *the New Testament*, the *Council of Trent*, a *Ritual* and a *Missal*, the four parts of the *Breviary*, the *Imitation of Christ*. We strongly advise reading the *Praxis Confessarii* of St Alphonsus Liguori, and in a general way all books written by the Saints themselves. With the exception of the *Provisional Rule*, all other books will be kept in the Community Library.

IV. Each will divide in four years his reading of the *Council of Trent*, the *Ritual*, the rubrics of the *Missal*, and the rubrics of the *Breviary*. *To each of the four years there corresponds the reading of one of these four works of the Church.*

V. *The missionaries will respect as the thought and doctrine of the Church, the Council of Trent and its Catechism, the Ritual and other authentic works of the Church. All points covered therein are above discussion.*

VI. *They will conform to the Roman Liturgy exclusively, without allowing themselves to indulge in any rite or chant contrary to it. Singing in the vernacular will not be permitted in the church, except before or after liturgical offices.*

VII. *We forbid that anyone write letters concerning the mission and its apostolic and ecclesiastical workings to anyone other than ourselves.*

VIII. *The missionaries will not maintain political opinions either between themselves or before others.*

IX. *They will not enter into discussion of the Slave Trade with anyone: they will be content to expose the thoughts of Holy Church proclaimed in the Apostolic Letters of Paul III (29 May 1537), of Urban VIII (20 December 1741), and of Gregory XVI (3 December 1839). From these teachings of Holy Church it is evident that trading in human beings is a monstrous crime inexcusable in a Christian whatever the pretext.* Missionaries shall consider as a person declared *excommunicate* everyone who admits to trading in slaves and who intends to persevere in this detestable trade. As to compulsory slavery, whether temporary or permanent, it is no more permissible in the case of Blacks than of Whites. It is against the spirit of the Gospel and the laws of the Church. The apostolic letters already referred to castigate slave traders, their accomplices and their supporters, those who sell, those who buy, those who own human beings.

X. They shall not try to establish the Church by way of or with the help of secular influences but by the gradual and ever charitable teaching of the truth about God, exposed with simplicity and apostolic generosity. They should be fully aware that God only uses in the apostolate priests who live with the sobriety and poverty of the apostles, that is to say, those who for love of God and souls are content with what is strictly necessary in food, dress and furnishings.

XI. They will observe the agreement made by us with M. Libermann, Superior General of the Congregation of the Holy Heart of Mary, to explain the *Provisional Rule*.

XII. These present directives and constitutions shall be pinned up in the missionaries' sacristy, so that each priest may make his own personal copy in order to make it the rule of his apostolic life.

Given in Dakar on the 1st August 1847.

† Benoît, Bishop of Callipolis.

(Manuscript of Mgr Truffet in the Archives of the Congregation of the Holy Ghost, 30 Rue Lhomond, 75005 PARIS. Ref. N° 228-B-II).

II. EXTRACTS FROM FATHER PAUL COULON'S ADDRESS

During his visit to Rome in 1846, Father Libermann proposed to the S.C. of Propaganda that they should appoint the

Abbé Benoît Truffet to be Vicar Apostolic of the Two Guineas. The Abbé had only recently joined the young Society of the Holy Heart of Mary, which had just reopened its mission to this territory and had already two communities there, one in Dakar and one in Gabon . . .

WHO WAS MGR BENOIT TRUFFET (1812-1847)?

Benoît Truffet was not a Frenchman. He was born at Rumilly (Savoy) on October 29, 1812, and was a subject of the Kingdom of Sardinia. This "neutrality" with regard to France would be used by Libermann when he presented him to Rome as candidate for the Bishopric of Haiti, in the first instance, and afterwards of the Two Guineas.

He had followed a brilliant seminary course at Chambéry and was ordained in 1839. He was appointed Professor of Rhetoric at the Royal College and at the Junior Seminary of Pont-Beauvoisin.

He was an intelligent and highly-cultured man and travelled a great deal in Europe (Germany, France, Italy). He wrote in many learned reviews and was a member of many learned societies.

In a book written at the time but published only after his death – *Italy, or A Conversion of the XIX Century* – he tells in romanticised form of his journeys through Italy and his conversations with Silvio Pellico, Manzoni and Cardinal Wiseman. From his discussions with Cardinal Wiseman, it is quite clear that he is an *Ultramontanist, and of the ecclesiastical tradition which would come to fruition in Vatican I*. His point of departure in his argumentation is always that of the four marks of the Church: "The Roman Church alone embraces all these characteristic notes of legitimacy" (p. 186).

As to *Moral Theology*, it is not surprising to find in his *Directives* as Bishop that he is a follower of St Alphonsus Liguori. (Cf. P. Guerber, S.J. *Rallying the French Clergy to Liguorian Morality: Abbé Gousset and his predecessors, 1785-1832*, Rome, 1973). This shows that Turin (well-known to Truffet as a Savoyard) was the centre for spreading the moral teachings of Liguori. The two heroes of M. Truffet's story, to which we have already referred, are two men from Lyons, travelling in Italy in search of truth. Lyons also, it

would seem, was a centre of Liguorian teaching: it was there that was published in 1823 the important little work by Bruno Lantieri entitled *Reflections on the Holiness and on the Doctrine of Blessed Liguori*.

Why, it may be asked, insist so much on the Liguorianism of Truffet? After all, Alphonsus Liguori had been canonised in 1839, and that gave authority to his teaching. Plongeron in his review of Guerber's book for the *Review of the History of the Church in France*, stresses that "the acclimatisation of Liguorian morality on Italian soil" at this time "obliges it to win the French clergy of the Restoration to Ultramontanism". It is no accident that Truffet was at one and the same time a Piedmontese, a follower of Liguori and an Ultramontanist. His theological stance is not at all surprising. Moreover, it is in entire harmony with that of Libermann.

It was in fact at the beginning of 1846 that Truffet decided to become a missionary. He came to Paris but hesitated about joining the Paris Foreign Missions. He went to Notre Dame des Victoires to consult the Abbé Desgenettes. The latter had already founded an archconfraternity of the Holy Heart of Mary and many conversions had already taken place there. M. Desgenettes had also launched at Notre Dame des Victoires a campaign in favour of the evangelisation of the Blacks. He knew Libermann and encouraged him with his own plans. Naturally therefore he sent M. Truffet to Libermann when he consulted him.

Benoît Truffet entered the Novitiate of the priests of the Holy Heart of Mary at La Neuville-les-Amiens on January 10, 1846. Libermann will appreciate him at his true worth.

Libermann needs a Bishop for the Two Guineas. He eventually proposes the Abbé Truffet. This is what he says in a letter to Mgr. Luquet: "Aged thirty-three, he is a man of sound judgement, solid and tried virtue, calm and thoughtful of spirit, strong and constant of character. I had intended keeping him here as Master of Novices but I must sacrifice that to the needs of an important Mission . . ." (early 1846: N.D. Supplements, p. 69).

Later, on November 19, 1847, Libermann writes to one of the Fathers in the community of Dakar, Fr Aragon, a man whose character might conflict with Mgr Truffet: "I can assure you that he (Mgr Truffet) is both perceptive and true in his outlook. All the time we have been together, we were in

agreement on everything we discussed together although we never expressed ourselves in the same terms" (N.D. IX, p. 321/2).

Undoubtedly, amongst the things Libermann discussed with Mgr Truffet and the novices was the document to be presented to Propaganda some months later, on his great plan of apostolate for Africa, which stressed in particular the need of a local clergy.

Benoît Truffet was allowed to make his final Novitiate retreat and his consecration to the apostolate, on January 6, 1847, before informing him of his appointment as Bishop of Callipolis and Vicar Apostolic of the Two Guineas.

He was consecrated Bishop at Notre Dame des Victoires on January 25, 1847. Before embarking at Bordeaux for Dakar on April 15, 1847, he wrote a series of letters which reflect his *essential concerns as new Bishop: slavery and the slave trade; the training of a local clergy and the establishment of a local hierarchy* (when their Church justified it); *independence of the political power.*

We should again stress the complete harmony of his views (even the expression of them) and those of Libermann, Mother Javouhey, Mgr Luquet and others. The missionary ferment of those years is truly astounding.

We quote a letter written by Mgr Truffet to the members of the Central Council of the Propagation of the Faith at Paris, before leaving for Dakar. It is dated March 28, 1847:

"We are not going to set up in Africa another Italy or France or indeed any other European country but only the Holy Catholic Church, which is outside every nationality or human system. With the grace given us from above, we wish to strip ourselves of all that is European, retaining only the thoughts that are the sole foundation of the older and of the new Christianities: the thoughts of the Church, which are those of the Spirit of God" . . .

We shall therefore be obliged to become Guineans, if we wish the Guineans to become Catholics" . . .

"In accordance with the same apostolic directive of Gregory XVI, the normal and genuine establishment of Catholicism in any country is dependent on the training of a local clergy and hierarchy" . . . I shall try to follow this way in Guinea, so that little by little the *Mission* becomes a *Church* governed by common law, and living out of its own local resources,

under the paternal supremacy of the Holy See" (Paule Brasseur: "*A la recherche d'un absolu missionnaire, etc.*," pp. 263-264, quoted on p. 161 of Fr Coulon's study).

Mgr Truffet arrived in Dakar on May 8, 1847 but would live there only for some months. He would in fact impose upon himself and upon the community of Dakar a local "cuisine" that was much too demanding. Weakened by this, he himself succumbed, on November 23, 1847, to what was probably an attack of malaria. (He had not received the quinine sent from Paris and did not worry about it. Neither would he allow the doctor attached to the French Navy to be called, though he did so later).

Nonetheless, in seven months, he had time to put into effect the ideas he had on the apostolate, as can be seen in the DIRECTIVES set out above.

THE SLAVE TRADE AMONGST THE BLACKS: THE ABOLITIONIST POLICY AND ACTION OF LIBERMANN AND TRUFFET

Slavery in the French colonies was abolished by the Revolution of 1789 in the name of the Rights of Man, but it was restored by Napoleon. After his fall, a great national debate on the subject went on between 1815 and 1848. In the latter years Victor Schoelcher, Assistant Secretary of the Navy and an apostle of the abolition of slavery in the islands, issued a Decree, dated April 27, 1848, which was duly signed by Lamartine, Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Libermann and his Work for the Blacks were very much involved in this campaign. The first two followers of Libermann at the time of the Foundation were directly concerned in this question. Eugene Tisserant, son of a former President of Haiti, had wished to devote himself to the freed slaves of San Domingo: Frederic Le Vavas seur, from Reunion, was himself the son of a slave-owner . . .

On February 2, 1839, the Abbé Desgenettes, parish priest of Notre Dame des Victoires, launched an apostolic campaign in favour of the evangelisation of the Blacks.

From 1815 to 1848, those for and against slavery in France kept up a public debate on the question helped by discussions, pamphlets, statistics, statements of moral princi-

ples, theories of political economy and theological prescriptions.

In 1847, the *Ami de la Religion* made itself the sounding-board of debates in the House of Peers and of controversies in the public press on the stance of the colonial clergy on slavery. Montalembert, Baron Dupin and others debated the question. Ledru-Rollin accused the Seminary of the Holy Ghost; M. Leguay, Superior (the Fusion with Libermann would only come later), answered him on May 1, 1847 in a letter published by *L'Ami de la Religion*.

We thus find the country faced with a social and political problem on which Libermann and his followers would express themselves concretely by their actions.

It should be noted that Montalembert himself frequented Notre Dame des Victoires and assisted there at Mgr Truffet's Consecration on January 25, 1847. On that occasion he asked him if he would kindly forward from Dakar documents which might be useful in the anti-slavery campaign.

Already the Pope had adopted a position against slavery in his Bull *In Supremo* of December 3, 1839. In it he said especially "... that the slave-trade is a monstrous crime which no pretext whatsoever can excuse in a Christian".

It is necessary to be aware of this context to appreciate the firm attitude of Mgr Truffet in the DIRECTIVES of 1847.

He had this cause so much at heart that he took time off to write from Dakar on September 15, 1847, a long letter to Mgr Bouvier, Bishop of Le Mans. The latter was in fact the author of *Institutiones Theologicae*, a theology manual published in separate fascicules from 1818 onwards and in a full edition in 1834. These *Institutiones* were used in some sixty seminaries in France and were revised thirteen times until 1886, constant changes being introduced (especially with the suppression of Gallicanism, which had been widespread). Mgr Truffet reproached this influential author for not having a clearly defined position on slavery, a position in conformity with that of the Church itself.

MGR TRUFFET AND THE COMMUNITY OF DAKAR IN 1847

The Community of Dakar had been established in 1845 by the members of the Holy Heart of Mary to take charge of all

that was not the Island of Gorée and the Prefecture Apostolic of St Louis, which were in the care of the Seminary of the Holy Ghost in the Rue Lhomond.

After the arrival of Mgr Truffet at Dakar on May 8, 1847, with reinforcements of personnel, the community of Dakar, including the Bishop, was composed of "eleven missionaries, two catechists and school-teachers, and four Brothers".

Mgr Truffet landed in the middle of a local political quarrel, the Chief of Cayor holding prisoner a Father and a Brother. Immediately, he began taking steps to give to the Mission a new beginning in conformity with his own ideas.

Suspicion of the European authorities and Whites in general: there should be the least contact possible with them, lest in the mind of the local people the missionaries might be identified too closely with the Colonial authority.

The first step was for all together to prepare themselves at Dakar, no longer going out singly. The language would be studied, theology would be studied. Three times a week the Bishop in person would give talks on pastoral subjects: on "Piety in the Chant", "Purity in the Liturgy", "De jure Missio-num" and kindred subjects.

The young and explosive Fr Aragon had sent a letter which was published in the *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi* in March 1847. In it he has set down details, true but unfavourable, about the King of Dakar and the island of Gorée. Mgr Truffet found that inexcusable in a missionary. In consequence, the missionaries were forbidden to write about the Mission to anyone other than the Bishop himself.

With eight pupils he at once began the *Junior Seminary*, where Latin and the local language, Wolof, would be taught, but not French. Mgr Truffet advanced three reasons for the exclusive use of Latin in the Seminary (without French):

If they do not know French, the seminarians are not likely to be tempted away by the agents of the European companies.

As Rome requires, the Mission must avoid all appearance of national bias;

That would cut short any suspicion amongst the Africans that the missionaries were French conquerors in disguise.

As to relations with Europeans, Mgr Truffet was very severe and already saw in their actions the beginning of what would later be called Colonial Imperialism:

"Many people in Europe make a mistake in seeing the spread of European ideas as a preparation for Christianity . . .

"All they (the local people) have got from the Europeans is love of money, how to use a rifle, the tobacco habit. Add to that the abuse of whiskey, which the Europeans sell in places where it is not forbidden by Moslem Law . . . As individuals, the French are generous and can be useful to us. But, once they represent the prejudices and tendencies of the civil authority, they become fussy, interfering and absurd: they would wish the Mission to be a centre for the spread of commerce" (Letter to the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda of July 7, 1847).

Mgr Truffet also had very definite ideas on *Methods of Evangelisation*. He refuses to enter into controversy, to indulge in polemics, with the Moslem leaders: he is satisfied to invite them to ask God for light on the truth and wishes that the missionaries be content to preach the truth, without argument, as the Apostles did.

He refused "help from secular sources", that is, according to Fr Chevalier of the community of Dakar, the support of European Governments, the favour of the most powerful in the land, the reputation of being savants and rich men. He did not wish his missionaries to learn Arabic or give themselves to learned discussions with the educated Moslems, the marabouts. The people of the country must not take them for learned or superior men.

In conclusion, Madame Brasseur, who has studied Mgr Truffet more deeply than any other and to whom we owe what we know historically of the matter, ends her study in the following way: "The relative success of later times plunged in obscurity this first stage in the installation of Catholicism in Senegambia. It seemed to us useful to recall that in the middle of the XIX century, a young missionary Bishop rose up in revolt against the Slave Trade and asserted the independence of the Church in face of the colonial administration" (From the article already quoted, p. 260).

Paul COULON, C.S.Sp.,
March 12, 1981.

