PART 2

Memories of Earlier Missions

Following in Jesuit Footsteps: British Expeditions to Ethiopia in the Early Victorian Era

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This volume explores the issue of encounters. When thinking about an encounter, the first image that comes to mind is a face-to-face meeting between two individuals: a chance meeting, a sudden turn around a bend that lets one know there is an “other” staring back at you. At times, an encounter plays out over years, many microcosms of confronting this or that other, rubbing up against what is with you but not you. From this rubbing, a bit of friction, a few sparks are born, which may either light the way in a descending darkness, or ignite an inferno that consumes the world.

This “rubbing up against” another drives much of human interaction and human history. World history is replete with tales of adventurers and romantics, climbing aboard this ship or that caravan, carrying themselves off to faraway lands, speaking with a king or a magi of this or that distant nation. Missionaries and explorers fanned out across nations and civilizations, generating meetings and instructive experiences. Encounters between Jesuits and Protestants bring to mind tales of individual confrontation with other individuals, a handshake or a violent strike exchanged in person, a Jesuit priest staring across the salt waters of Nagasaki Harbor toward the island of Dejima, where willful heretics expanded their trades at the expense of the Jesuits’ own influence. Yet so many encounters lack this drama or personal touch. So many encounters remain of the second or third order, hearsay or rumor of this or that “other,” far away beyond the horizon, but most definitely existing; an encounter with the idea of an encounter.

Historians are left with records of momentous meetings, a window into what came before, in which we can find an encounter of long past. Such inscribed experiences spread out along networks, books, letters, and maps, producing an intellectual echo of the encounter that moves far beyond the space and time of its experiential roots. Thanks to the technology of writing, it has been possible for so many then and now to engage in encounters across ages and settings that they do not share, feeling perhaps, through this echo, a sense of the “rubbing up” of the two exchanging glances on the page.

The influences or consequences of these secondary-order encounters can often be detected more widely and subtly than any other first-order experience of a handshake, and it is this type of encounter to which the following analysis turns. Under the conceptual framework of encounters between Jesuits and Protestants in Africa, this chapter examines an “encounter” that played out over the pages of many books and manuals, bridging a span of more than two centuries, between Jesuit missionaries sent throughout the world in the wake of the Renaissance and Protestant Britons of the Victorian age poised on the cusp of a new empire upon which the sun would never set. Although the literary encounter could happen only from the later perspective of the British, each was informed by their shared experience of encounter with the lands of Ethiopia. Drawn by old mythologies and ancient histories of Abyssinia, Jesuit and Protestant alike toured the lands, treated with lords, and observed the people. In their efforts to open the pathways inland, the British drew consciously on the historical examples of their Catholic forebears, their records and inscribed memories, an intimate encounter with Jesuit writings from a Society that had almost completely disappeared under decades of suppression. This space will be used to explore and analyze the literary encounter of British travelers with their Jesuit predecessors, “rubbing up against” an encounter that they both shared, and the historical and intellectual reverberations that subsequently colored contemporary interpretations of their histories. The chapter proceeds by revisiting the narrative of the original Jesuit missionaries in Ethiopia and progresses to the entrance and growth of British influence. In particular, the chapter highlights the perspectives through which these Victorian authors approached the tales of their Catholic predecessors. The chapter will then reflect on the character of this “rubbing” between Jesuits and Protestants, and most importantly, the second-order effects of this historical encounter.

Lands of Prester John and Early Modern Jesuit Visitors

A detailed history of the lands south of the Egyptian Nile and west of the long Red Sea coasts is beyond the scope of the brief discussion here. Suffice to say, for many long centuries, the intercourse between the highlands of interior northeastern Africa and the Arabian Peninsula developed and sustained great waves of trade and exchange of “civilization.” The activity of these ancient populations established regular flows of various commodities into lands that suffered from their lack. The development of Middle Eastern agricultural techniques meant that the Kingdom of Da’amat, situated at Yeha in Tigray

(now northwestern Ethiopia), could exchange raw products such as ivory, gold, tortoiseshell, and slaves for finished goods of cloth, tools, and worked metals.¹ The importation of South Arabian customs and forms of political organization birthed the major state of Axum, from the city of the same name, which grew from the ruins of Da'amat to cover most of the western Red Sea coast south of Egypt and the associated upper highlands proceeding southwest from the sea's edge. This major political force came to dominate the area through its issuance of local currency and a regional military supremacy that resulted from its recorded conquests of southern Arabian rivals across the sea.² Essentially, Axum augmented itself as a partner in the lively international trade of the Eastern Roman Empire's Mediterranean exchange, which stimulated the southward spread of an early Christian orthodoxy from Alexandria's ruling patriarch.³ The vicissitudes of domination, however, gradually reduced this state, first as a result of non-Christian south Arabian rebellions, and eventually, the loss of western coastal control after the seventh-century rise of Islam. These developments failed to penetrate far into the mountainous highlands, in which remnants of Axumite and particularly Coptic Christian traditions remained, sustaining a complex culture on the overland trade routes that fed on the links between coastal and interior northeastern Africa. The mountains of Lasta in these highlands birthed a renewed dynastic line in the Zagwes (c.900–1270), a period still poorly understood by historians, but furthermore such transformations drew the attention of crusading Europeans through a mutual meeting point at Antioch.

These violent interpenetrations of the Middle Ages therefore highlighted a renewed cultural diversification of the Levant and Arabia upon which the military sovereigns of these highlands consciously drew, establishing mythologies of a continuous Judeo-Christian tradition from the historico-cultural panoply of peoples and influences crisscrossing the region. The fourteenth-century conquests of Amda Siyon (r.1314–44) established networks of imperial garrisons across previously independent fiefdoms of various nations while

1 Harold Markus, *A History of Ethiopia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 3.

2 Richard Pankhurst, *An Introduction to the Economic History of Ethiopia from Early Times to 1800* (London: Lalibela House, 1961), 44.

3 Church tradition highlights the shipwreck of two Syrian boys, Aedesius (fl. early fourth century) and Frumentius (d.383), who became ambassadors and bishops during the early Christian internationalism of the fourth century C.E. Political and theological exiles flowed along these newly established links into the relatively wanting societies of the highlands to become cultural elites. Marcus, *History*, 7–8.

reestablishing a network of information and monitoring through a renewed relationship with the Egyptian Coptic Church. A presentation of cultural, theological, and “national” uniformity became the key to the power of fifteenth-century Zara Yaqob (1399–1468, r.1434–68), who intentionally staged his coronation as *negusa negast* (king of kings) in the highlands at Axum’s ancient capital. Using Christianity as a convenient anti-Muslim ideology, Yaqob reconquered the western Red Sea coasts while establishing a permanent capital for his kingdom and reaching out to various non-Muslim powers across the Mediterranean world.

These were the conditions under which a post-Roman medieval Europe began to reestablish its knowledge of a non-Muslim, African kingdom nestled somewhere in the mountainous highlands west of the Red Sea.⁴ Yaqob had sent ambassadors to courts in Rome and a few ecclesiastical councils, while some European travelers had begun to filter into the country through connections in the Levant. This growing interaction was hampered significantly by the fact that most of the foreigners and skilled artisans that made their way into the highlands were not allowed to leave again, for reasons of both security and skilled labor shortages. Yet these hazy stories had piqued the interest of the Portuguese sovereigns, looking for a way to break the Venetian–Egyptian trading monopolies, as they began to work their way down the western coasts of Africa toward the Cape of Good Hope. Fifteenth-century legends of this “Prester John,” a powerful, wealthy Christian lord who had been fighting successfully against the Ottomans, had reached through the peninsular heartlands of Italy and drawn the Portuguese into hopes of an alliance.⁵ When a letter from just such a sovereign arrived in the hands of an Armenian trader, Matthew, on the doorstep of King Manuel I of Portugal (1469–1521, r. 1495–1521) in 1509, it seemed that these legends had been proved as truth.

After the Portuguese takeover of Goa in 1510, the immediate importance of establishing an alliance with this mysterious kingdom waned somewhat. Yet in addition to the new Portuguese entrants into the Indian Ocean, the Ottoman defeat of Mamluk Egypt in 1517 had turned the Red Sea into an “Ottoman lake” and reinvigorated coastal Muslim communities. The Portuguese invaded and took over the northern port at Massawa, finally penetrating the highlands in

4 *The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* makes mention of Axum during the survey of the shores during the first century CE, and this seems to be one of the last serious historical recordings of the kingdom left to Western Europe before the late Middle Ages and Renaissance. See *The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, trans. G.W.B. [George Wynn Brereton] Huntingford (London: Hakluyt Society, 1980).

5 Elaine Sanceau, *The Land of Prester John* (New York: Knopf, 1994).

1520 with an embassy led by Father Francisco Álvares (c. 1465–1536).⁶ Sticking for the most part to their “blue water” strategy, the Portuguese efforts toward inland contact remained intermittent, and Lebna Dengel’s (1501–40, r.1508–40) control of the highlands began to fall to the revitalized jihad of Zeila’s Ahmad Gran (c.1506–43). This holy warlord brought ruin to the highland provinces until 1541, when the Portuguese had established enough strength in the Indian Ocean to land again at Massawa with four hundred musketeers. Gran’s defeat in 1543 opened the period of direct intercourse with a Christian West that would define the story of the Jesuits there.

Founded in 1540, the Society of Jesus represented a Catholic revitalization movement based on a wave of “Counter-Reformation” missionization intended to restore the political and theological loyalties of protesting Christian nations. Note of this besieged “Christian” nation saved by the Portuguese was drawn under the same spirit, as even the Society’s co-founder Ignatius of Loyola (c.1491–1556) is said to have fervently wished to missionize there.⁷ After the first Portuguese invasion, Álvares was supplanted by another Catholic who had accompanied the mission: João Bermudez (d.1570) was now recognized as the new *abuna*, the Christian patriarch, which cemented a new alliance between the emperor and Portugal and replaced the Coptic suzerainty of now Ottoman-occupied Egypt. This relationship was taken over by members of the Society, as ordered by the pope. Recalling the political machinations of late Renaissance Europe, where a Counter-Reformation Catholic Church still ran a juridical and spiritual empire of sorts, submitting to proper spiritual authority and rites was a confirmation of a certain symbolic mastery. And this is what the first Jesuits, João Nunes Barreto (c.1510–62) and Andrés de Oviedo (1518–77), were sent to obtain from the newly allied sovereign in 1557. While Barreto was invested as patriarch by the pope and he managed to arrive in Goa, it was Oviedo who first entered Ethiopia and began negotiations with the emperor about a national conversion to Catholicism.⁸ Knowing well that this would alienate him from the very people he was trying to win over in a precarious wartime situation, Emperor Menas (d.1563, r.1559–63), with whom Oviedo

6 Francisco Álvares, *Narrative of the Portuguese Embassy to Abyssinia during the Years 1520–1527*, trans. Henry Edward John Stanley (London: Hakluyt Society, 1881). The death date cannot be fixed, but occurred between 1536 and 1541. The popularity of his narrative as the first reliable and direct observations on a declining Ethiopia led to its translation and distribution by the Hakluyt Society during the late Victorian period.

7 Pankhurst, *Introduction*, 81.

8 Michael Russell, *Nubia and Abyssinia: Comprehending Their Civil History, Antiquities, Arts, Religion, Literature, and Natural History* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1833), 134–37.

treated, instead sent the Jesuit to a small village near Axum, keeping his party under close guard as valuable diplomatic envoys (a typical ploy for European visitors or royal rivals in the complex history of the region). Oviedo renamed his prison village “Fremona” in the spirit of the first conversion of that country, effected, according to tradition, by the ancient Frumentius himself.

The Jesuits essentially became the link by which Portuguese India, the crown, and the papacy maintained their tenuous connection to the Prester’s realm. While the Ottoman presence in south Arabia and the Indian Ocean had been on the wane as the empire concentrated on its conflicts in the Balkans and Safavid Mesopotamia, new European entrants into the Indian Ocean threatened the Portuguese monopoly on the seas, while the “Galla” (Oromo) were among the revitalized migrations of African peoples (“pagans”) to the south and west of the highlands. The second half of the sixteenth century was spotted with failed attempts to augment the aging Jesuit presence in the highlands: in 1589, a mission was shipwrecked in the Red Sea with the Jesuits captured by Turkish authorities; another mission, in 1595, ended in a Jesuit’s unfortunate decapitation in Massawa.⁹ Geographical knowledge of these highlands continued to be poor given the difficulties involved in sending information out of the country: “Ethiopia” as a locale was interpreted by Europeans to be immense, stretching far south into “pagan” lands as far as the Cape of Good Hope, and the sixteenth-century geographic literature bears out this seriously flawed characterization. The Jesuits’ efforts to gain access to and information about the country eventually succeeded, however, in the figure of Pedro Páez (1564–1622), a Spanish Jesuit captured in the 1589 mission who learned Arabic during his captivity in Yemen before returning to Massawa in 1603.

Páez spent nearly twenty years in Ethiopia, taking over the Jesuit enclave at Fremona and making inroads into the good graces of the *negusa negast* Za Dengel (d.1604, r.1603–4). He traveled the highlands extensively and recorded a great deal of geographical knowledge about the country’s size and natural features, among many other things. In his *History of Ethiopia*, which remained unpublished and largely unavailable for nearly three centuries, Páez presents a summation of all Jesuit knowledge and history on the country until that point, including the Solomonic legends first popularized under the Zagwe, and the diplomatic history of the first Portuguese embassies and Oviedo’s

9 Hervée Pennec, “Missionary Knowledge in Context: Geographical Knowledge of Ethiopia in Dialogue during the 16th and 17th Centuries,” in *African History: Written Culture in a Colonial Context*, Vol 11: *Africa and the Americas 1500–1900*, ed. Adrien Delmas and Nigel Penn (Boston: Brill, 2012), 75–96.

original mission.¹⁰ Yet for our current purposes, Páez's observations went far beyond those of his predecessors: he wrote chapters on the natural wildlife present in the highlands, the climate and biospheres, the rivers, lakes, and geographical features. He appears to have been fully aware of Ethiopia's religious diversity and the variety of "vassals" that were theoretically subject to the rule of the *negusa negast*. Páez himself served as the front-man for a new wave of Jesuit activity focused on the conversion of Ethiopians to Catholicism: Páez made inroads due to his knowledge of the language and customs, and perhaps his personal character, but once he was replaced after death, a more uncompromising character of the Society showed its face in his successors. When new Jesuit infiltrators finally made their way into the highlands again in the 1620s, they continued a great deal of the work that Páez had begun of describing and cataloging the features of the highland peoples and their cultures, as well as the region's geography. However, the newly assigned Catholic patriarch Afonso Mendes (1579–1659) also placed great pressure upon the *negusa negast* Susenyos (1572–1632, r.1606–32) to publicly profess the Catholic allegiance he had privately given to Páez, thereby earning the spurn of his own son and local political forces. The key context to recall is that during the period while the Jesuits were measuring, recording, negotiating with highland cultures, violent conflict continued to rock the entire area. During the previous century of intercourse, the area supposedly ruled by the *negusa negast* had shrunk by over half, and his ability to exercise power, outside of receiving the occasional tribute (perhaps alternatively seen as a taxation payment or religious donation) from various local warlords and chiefs (who could simultaneously be making some or many other similar payments), might be considered negligible. After Susenyos was overthrown by his son Fasilides (1603–67, r.1632–67), the Jesuits were again confined to Fremona while Fasilides established a new capital, named Gondar, far inland at Lake Tana; he eventually expelled the Jesuits completely, prohibiting their entry through Red Sea ports. Here ended the early modern Catholic dalliance with the highland powers connected with the *negusa negast*.

Textual Transmissions to Enlightenment Europe and Britain

The early seventeenth century marks a serious bookend in European understanding of and activity in the highlands of modern-day Ethiopia. While

10 Pedro Páez, *Pedro Páez's History of Ethiopia, 1622, Vols. I–II*, ed. Isabel Boavida, Hervé Pennec, and Manuel João Ramos (London: Hakluyt Society, 2011).

Fasilides and other Gondarine *negusa negasts* engaged in new architectural, cultural, and educational pursuits, the court continued to exist in isolation. Domestic and international trade was completely dependent upon Muslims and other outsiders, including various near-eastern foreigners. Many Oromo had been politically incorporated into the empire during the previous century, but they had now become a major military and feudal force that had reduced the *negusa negast* and other Gondarine court members to titular puppets. By the end of the seventeenth century, the *negusa negast* had been forced to issue a decree legitimatizing the primacy of the local lords (*ras*) over court officials. Gondar became something like a captive royal compound, and an “Abyssinia” ruled by a “Solomonic dynasty” regressed into an insubstantial concept. By the mid-1700s, the Age of Princes (*Zamana Masafent*) had ushered in a century of political anarchy and encouraged the mayhem of constant civil war.¹¹

European concern for the highlands and a Christian Ethiopia also waned significantly as the theater of competition shifted toward the control of ocean trade routes and commercial entrepôts in Indian and Chinese waters. By the seventeenth century, England had emerged as a maritime power and began taking over various ports of Portuguese control in the East. Information on these exotic and faraway destinations was compiled and translated first by Richard Hakluyt (1553–1616) in his *Principal Navigations*, including a 1597 letter from Queen Elizabeth I (1533–1603, r.1558–1603) to the Ethiopian emperor asking for safe passage for her subjects, as well as a short abridgment of Álvarez's first narrative of the Portuguese, together with other information that identified “Aethiopians” as an ancient people on par with the Phoenicians or Carthaginians.¹² The Society of Jesus itself continued its publications on Ethiopia during this period, but they were increasingly limited by the lack of reliable information on the interior and the struggles of an eighteenth-century Society headed toward the suppression. Mid-seventeenth-century Jesuits such as Jerónimo Lobo (1595–1678) and Balthazar Tellez (1596–1675) revised old Jesuit manuscripts on Ethiopia while speaking with one or two Ethiopian visitors to Rome where ambassador-monks still appeared on rare occasions. Tellez in particular revised the unpublished *History of Ethiopia* of Manoel de Almeida (1580–1646), itself based on the work of Páez, to publish his own *História geral de Etiópia-a-alta* (1660) in Portugal, including some evidence of intercourse

11 Marcus, *History*, 47.

12 Richard Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques & Discoveries of the English Nation, Made by Sea or Over-land to the Remote and Farthest Distant Quarters of the Earth at Any Time within the Compasse of These 1600 Years*, Vols. 1–X (Glasgow: James MacLehose and Sons, 1903).

with English officials.¹³ Copies of the book were extremely rare, and it took over thirty-five years for an unabridged translation to appear in French in 1728.

In general, corresponding readers from Protestant nations like Britain continued to wrestle with an exceptionally strong anti-Catholic, anti-Jesuit regard for information on such works heading into a new polemical period.¹⁴ By the eighteenth century, and though some information had been passed through a still-strong Portuguese–British alliance, Portuguese and Jesuit networks were under severe strain as their overseas trade monopolies collapsed. Therefore, it was from a German scholar, a patchwork nation with no colonial exploits just emerging from the horrors of the Thirty Years' War (1618–48), that balanced and reliable information on contemporary Ethiopia began to emerge. Hiob Ludolf (1624–1704), sometimes considered the modern father of European Ethiopian studies, worked throughout the second half of the seventeenth century to standardize much academic European knowledge about Ethiopia, especially its classical languages. In a 1649 visit to Rome, he chance encountered “Father Gregory” (Abba Gorgoryos, 1595–1658), one of four locally residing Ethiopian monks, with whom he was able to converse in Ge'ez (as Gregory knew no Latin and little Italian).¹⁵ As a result of their cooperation, Ludolf published extensively on Ethiopia's language, culture, and history, including several dictionaries and an exceptional, encyclopedic history that appeared in English in 1682.¹⁶ Ludolf's studies became the contemporary gold-standard for information on the hidden land of “Prester John.”

While Ludolf composed his volumes in European cloisters, others began to consider using this growing collection of written information on Abyssinia

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- 13 Jerónimo Lobo, *The Itinerário of Jerónimo Lobo*, trans. Donald M. Lockhart (London: Hakluyt Society, 1984), xxv. Lobo himself appeared to be in contact with the Royal Society of London according to a 1668 letter, in which he claims to have assisted Tellez in the volume's composition.
  - 14 Johann Michael Wansleben, *A Brief Account of the Rebellions and Bloodshed Occasioned by the Anti-Christian Practices of the Jesuits and Other Popish Emissaries in the Empire of Ethiopia* (London: Jonathan Edwin, 1679) provides an excellent example of this openly hostile attitude.
  - 15 Edward Ullendorff, *The Ethiopians: An Introduction to the Country and People* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 8.
  - 16 Hiob Ludolf, *A New History of Ethiopia*, trans. J.P. Gent (London: Samuel Smith, 1682). The details contained are impressive: ethnographic and geographic data, politics and systems of governance, religious customs and affairs, their economy and social/cultural habits. The sub-chapter headings demonstrate that Ludolf himself remained hostile to the historical Jesuit activities; the Jesuit “errors,” local “quarrels,” and the rebellions provoked by “Jesuit power” and “Roman religion.”

to attempt personal visits themselves. At this early stage, independent efforts were extremely rare: for example, French physician Charles-Jacques Poncet (1655–1706) was sent from his post as an apothecary in Cairo to Gondar upon diplomatic request, the first such visit in decades, to treat the leprosy of *Negusa Negast Iyasu I* (1654–1706, r.1682–1706) and his sons in 1699. Poncet produced a short volume describing his journey and experiences in 1704.¹⁷ More marked was the influx of written information on Ethiopia in English and consumed by a growing class of literate semi-intellectuals—after Ludolf, the English translation of Poncet’s volume and another of Tellez were released in 1710 with growing numbers of printing collaborators.¹⁸ A major breakout of the Ethiopian story from Ludolf’s scholarly world occurred in 1735: an English poet and playwright, Samuel Johnson (1709–84), translated an entirely new English copy of Lobo’s travels from the French original of 1728. While the translation was rough and required some revisions of the original French, it was written in the colloquial style that characterized Johnson’s other works and therefore met with much popularity.¹⁹ These travel logs of Jesuit missionaries exploring “Aethiopia” in a somewhat distant past therefore began “rubbing up” against a particular and novel social class being formed in Britain and networked with the rest of Europe under a new, more popularized, artistic, bourgeois framework. In this light, it is easy to understand the subsequent publication of Johnson’s *A History of Rasselas* in 1759; this richly written (yet fictional) historical novella revolved around a “Prince of Abyssinia” named Rasselas and his “adventures” during a rebellious sojourn outside of his homeland. This romantic and fanciful tale became so popular that it was reissued multiple times until well into the nineteenth century.

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- 17 William Foster, trans., *The Red Sea and Adjacent Countries at the Close of the Seventeenth Century, as Described by Joseph Pitts, William Daniel, and Charles Jacques Poncet*, trans. William Foster (London: Hakluyt Society, 1949). Previous to the Hakluyt Society’s 1949 translation, it was first published in English in 1709, in London, translated from the original French produced by Poncet himself; *La relation abrégée du Voyage que M. Charles Poncet, médecin françois, fit en Ethiopie en 1698, 1699 & 1700*.
  - 18 Both were published/printed out of “St. Paul’s Church-yard” in London: the significance of this site remains beyond this chapter but would likely be an interesting and noteworthy investigation.
  - 19 Joachim Le Grand (1653–1733) described Lobo’s narrative as “so curious and entertaining.” It is this attitude, rather than that of the scholar Ludolf, which appears to have animated Johnson’s work. Joachim Le Grand, *A Voyage to Abyssinia, by Father Jerome Lobo, a Portuguese Missionary, Containing the History, Natural, Civil, and Ecclesiastical, of That Remote and Unfrequented Country*, trans. Samuel Johnson (London: Elliot and Kay, 1789), 23.

As the intellectual classes of Europe and particularly Britain began to expand and diversify with the progress of the Enlightenment, so too grew the confidence of a new “nation” to strike out into the world and extract some truth from these elegant mysteries. One of the first and bravest in the attempt was James Bruce of Kinnaird (1730–94). Bruce not only conceived of an ambitious plan to discover the source of the Nile but furthermore had the determination and material resources to realize it. The location of the river’s source was a subject of great debate even among the Jesuit travelers of previous centuries, yet Bruce’s choice of challenge was not in favor of a Catholic world-community; rather, he hoped to

have shewn to the world of what value the efforts of every individual of your Majesty’s subjects may be; that numbers are not always necessary to the performance of great and brilliant actions, and that no difficulties or dangers are unsurmountable to a heart warm with affection and duty to his Sovereign [...].²⁰

In other words, Bruce conceived of himself as achieving some great feat, through his own capacities, despite the fact that many modern authors claim that Páez’s surveys on the Nile’s source are decidedly more accurate. Indeed, Bruce was essentially aiming to demonstrate the superiority of a rising Protestant, nationally conscious European nation contrasted against the sclerosis of Catholicism.

This self-aggrandizing attitude revealed itself in his appraisals of the previous generation of Jesuit missionaries and their writings. While demonstrating his familiarity with these narratives, Bruce’s evaluations remain decidedly hostile and even insulting. He refers to the celebrated Lobo as “a grovelling, fanatic priest” who wrote “a heap of fables, and full of ignorance and presumption [...]” He forcefully questioned all the details of descriptive geography in Lobo’s *Historia* and discounted the Jesuit’s ability to understand cartography. Yet, notwithstanding this dismissive attitude, Bruce indeed blew open the doors to the nineteenth-century engagement with Ethiopia: he had successfully led an independent mission into the heart of the highlands, where he encountered the reigning *negusa negast* and the *ras* who controlled him in Gondar, Mikael Sehul (c.1691–1779). Through his own linguistic capabilities, Bruce was able to

20 Samuel Shaw, *An Interesting Narrative of the Travels of James Bruce, Esq. into Abyssinia, to Discover the Sources of the Nile, Abridged from the Original Work* (London: B.D. Symonds, 1800), 12. Of course, the “majesty” of the British “sovereign” does appear to mirror a religious devotion to God.

interact with numerous locals to produce a five-volume narrative on his travels and Ethiopia in general, effectively rivaling those of previous Jesuits, and with more contemporary fame. With its fine drawings and detailed information, Bruce's volume brought to life the fired imaginations of bourgeois literates whom Johnson's adventure tales had already aroused. He reiterated the claim that Ethiopia was an ancient society like Egypt, ripe for exploration and study, and he displayed no lack of skill at self-promotion during his meetings with European sovereigns after his return.²¹ The five years of his travels, combined with the two he spent among the Ethiopian court, presented an exciting window into a living Abyssinia. While Ludolf had perfected the paper image, Bruce had shown it was real.

A powerful tide of energy followed the 1790 publication of Bruce's *Travels*. Bruce had originally been drawn into his work in Africa by doing coastal survey work for the British consul in Algiers, and this practical objective was clearly a preoccupation for a rising blue-water empire. By 1804, another nobleman, George Annesley (1770–1844), together with his secretary, Henry Salt (1780–1827), also succeeded in penetrating the Tigray highlands by way of the Red Sea and the ancient port of Massawa.²² When news of the mission's success reached London, the British government immediately sent out an official naval survey led by Salt in order to produce proper navigational charts and lead the king's representatives safely from Massawa into Tigray. Not only did they establish regular diplomatic contact with Wolde Selassie (c.1745–1816), newly reigning *ras* of Tigray, but Salt was also able to use his unparalleled artistic skills to produce paintings and maps far superior to those of Bruce. His 1814 volume *A Voyage to Abyssinia* outdoes Bruce in precision, presentation, and clarity.²³ Yet Salt's written scholarship also had important implications in the "rubbing up" of the Jesuit histories with the contemporary events of a rising Victorian Britain. While confirming through those he met the truth of Bruce's impact and presence, Salt provides a strong, informed critique of Bruce's tendency to self-aggrandize his own achievements, and questions his quality as a reliable

21 For example, he prepared and presented a copy of the lost biblical book of Enoch (preserved in Ethiopia) to the king of France Louis XV (r.1715–74). The volume of his narrative itself was dedicated and presented to King George III (r.1760–1820) of Britain as well. Many of the manuscripts he brought back were delivered to and still remain in royal libraries. Ullendorff, *Ethiopians*, 13.

22 Paul Henze, *Layers of Time: A History of Ethiopia* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 109.

23 Henry Salt, *A Voyage to Abyssinia, and Travels into the Interior of That Country, Executed under the Orders of the British Government in the Years 1809 and 1810* (London: F.C. & J. Rivington, 1814).

information source at all.²⁴ He accuses Bruce of willfully deviating from the truth and misrepresenting Lobo and Páez in order to build his own heroic legend.²⁵ In contrast, the moderate Salt praises Páez's "extra-ordinary abilities" and the extreme value of Jesuit works like those of Tellez, "undoubtedly the most valuable work now existing on Abyssinian affairs, and there are said to be only three copies of it in England."²⁶ He regarded Tellez's travel accounts as the most accurate recordings of the Massawa route from the Red Sea to enter the highlands, which he himself had followed in entering the country rather than the overland Nile route of Bruce.²⁷ His major criticism remains the Portuguese nationality of these "priests" and the lack of attention they gave to their own vassals, complaining that "their motive proceeded rather from an idle vanity of extending the list of their proselytes, than from any actual desire to benefit the individuals whom they pretended to convert."²⁸ Salt shows his own character in these accusations, highlighted in his volume's dedication, which, like Bruce, he gives to the British crown; unlike Bruce, who sought to promote his individual worth, Salt almost sounds like a missionary himself:

Should [this volume] succeed in attracting your notice to the present forlorn and distracted state of Abyssinia, so far as to induce your Royal Highness to promote the welfare of that country, by the introduction of useful arts together with a judicious advancement of the true tenets of the Christian Religion among its inhabitants, I shall feel that my exertions in this cause have not been in vain [...].²⁹

This notion of promoting the "welfare" of Abyssinia through "useful arts" and the "Christian religion" became the founding spirit for the Victorian era's interactions with the Ethiopian highlands. Indeed, the writings of the Jesuits described for these British visitors what Ethiopia "once was" and could be again. In order to realize these goals, much knowledge of the country was again necessary, as greater numbers of increasingly educated British citizens began trying to find their way into the country.

24 Ibid., 334, 338.

25 Ibid., 341. Despite this, Salt proves himself to be a very balanced and thoughtful man regarding Bruce's accomplishments: "I am perfectly aware how much Mr. Bruce has accomplished; and no man can any more truly admire his courage, his perseverance, his sagacity, or his genius than myself [...]" 344.

26 Ibid., 480–81 (see note).

27 Ibid., 202–3.

28 Ibid., 65.

29 Ibid., iii.

Victorian Missionaries, Scientists, and the Reappraisal of the Jesuit Legacy

The continued decline of the Ottoman Empire during the late eighteenth century had stimulated the emergence of Muhammad Ali Pasha (1769–1849), a commander in the Ottoman army who seized power in Egypt and attempted to form his own independent dynasty after Napoleon's invasions in the early nineteenth century. Muhammad Ali realized his independence rested upon both his economic health and military puissance, and he accordingly developed strong relationships with the trade consulates of European powers who grudgingly accepted the wane of Ottoman influence. As Ali's armies began solidifying their control of the southern provinces, travelers searching for Salt's Abyssinia began to follow in their wake. The 1822 journal of George Waddington (1793–1869) represents an account of one such early journey. Waddington was a reverend investigating regions of Orthodox Christianity, and after receiving assistance from the British consul in Egypt and other local allies, he proceeded to explore well south along the Nile through Nubia to Me'rawe (Meroë) for the first time since Bruce.³⁰ His mistaken belief that he had reached the ancient capital of Ethiopia at Meroë demonstrated these new entrants' poor understanding of the region.

Waddington was not an outlier in the early nineteenth-century British milieu, as the sentiments expressed by Salt seemed to animate much activity in civil society. A growing evangelical revival spurred the foundation of new missionary organizations like the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) and the London Missionary Society (LMS). Especially important was the Church Missionary Society (CMS), founded in 1799 and renamed in 1812, which promoted British evangelical activity in the overseas spaces they were coming to dominate in Africa, India, and other parts of the world. In 1830, the CMS supported a multinational missionary party headed by Swiss-born Samuel Gobat (1799–1879) to investigate the conditions in Ethiopia and provide the spiritual and material instruction for which Salt had pined.³¹ Gobat became a central figure in Ethiopia, the first European to visit Gondar since Bruce. The journal of his three-year residence in the city provides numerous details on Abyssinia and in particular the theological discussions in which he engaged with the local priesthood while his missionary party translated scripture into Amharic for distribution. He appeared at all times to make great efforts to integrate himself

30 George Waddington and Barnard Hanbury, *Journal of a Visit to Some Parts of Ethiopia* (London: John Murray, 1822), iv–vi.

31 Henze, *Layers*, 126.

into a living Ethiopia, conforming to local virtues. But he expressly desired to find the best means of diffusing the word of God, “rendering himself useful to this miserable people, plunged into the depths of superstition and error.”³² His observations serve to confirm the absence of decisive information on Abyssinia’s current conditions: Gobat could only guess at the total population, though he was able to identify the five major princes currently embroiled in a struggle for power, calling them all “brothers in Christ.”³³

Gobat’s observations indicate the social climate underpinning the rapid increase in Protestant missionary work during the following decades. He identifies the Jesuits as definite “pioneers” for Christ, distinguished from the earlier Portuguese period. The way he characterized the Jesuit relationships with Abyssinian figures is revealing, however: Oviedo was too bold and demanding, altogether “unbecoming of his condition or errand”; and even Salt’s more positive image of Páez was tarnished in Gobat’s eyes—his close work with Za Den-gel was simply the result of his position as a Romish spy, trying to use religious “sophistry” to gain temporal power in the country.³⁴ Gobat instead paints the Ethiopian emperors as equals of the Jesuits: Gelawdewos (“Claudius,” 1521–59, r.1540–59) had equal theological knowledge to Oviedo, and could best the Jesuit in both discussions and writings. The ejection of the Jesuits was therefore reflected in the natural desire of the people to defend “the worship of their fathers” and stop the “demolition of the throne, the subversion of our religion.”³⁵ This description seems to intentionally express the independent anti-Catholic character of Christian Abyssinia, while raising the profile of their legitimate “Christian” knowledge. Gobat’s regret was that the great zeal and education of the Jesuits was improperly used in “propagating the errors of popery,” while he himself advised that future missionaries should learn from this history.³⁶

Gobat’s perspectives on this relationship set the stage for the increased missionary engagement with Ethiopia that followed in his wake. One of his companions, Karl W. Isenberg (1806–64), stayed on in Tigray after Gobat’s

32 Samuel Gobat, *Three Years’ Residence in Abyssinia* (New York: M.W. Dodd, 1850), 113.

33 Ibid., 31, 35–36. This religious viewpoint echoed the spirit of the times, a Christian revival and missionary drive shared across the Anglophone sphere and characterized in the United States as the Second Great Awakening.

34 Ibid., 66–69, 76. Specifically, he accuses the Jesuits of dreaming of using military power to subdue the Ethiopian court.

35 Ibid., 85, 95.

36 Ibid., 108, 114. “Both the philanthropist and the Christian must grieve that so much time has been wasted, so much labor lost, so much fortitude and Christian heroism spent to no valuable purpose, and so many lives sacrificed in carrying forward an undertaking so entirely at variance with the benign and heavenly spirit of the Gospel.”

departure to become bishop of Jerusalem, and he was joined in 1837 by Johann Ludwig Krapf (1810–81). Both of these German missionaries attempted to continue the work of Gobat's Christian "charity" without falling into the Jesuit "trap" of which he had warned. But this proved exceedingly difficult: the two missionaries were expelled from Tigray in 1838 after conflicts with Abyssinian churchmen, which Krapf conveniently blamed on the simultaneous meddling of the Church of Rome.³⁷ Making their way from Zeila to Shoa, a semi-independent Christian kingdom in southern Abyssinia known only poorly to Gobat, Isenberg and Krapf established themselves and recommitted to their simple charity work "diffus[ing] Scriptural light in a region of darkness," in contrast with, they claimed, a Catholic vehemence that locals "still remember" with violent dissatisfaction. The missionaries' written works, echoing the high scholarship of Ludolf, filled British presses with information on Ethiopia while they also continued to translate Bibles and other works for local distribution.³⁸ Yet the difficulties of their enterprise weighed heavily on them as complaints increased about the lack of Amharic competency among most of the populace, the politico-theological controversies that divided Abyssinia internally, and the hard realization that much of local "Christianity" remained a syncretic "mixture of Jew, Muslim, Christian, and Pagan" rites (a distasteful diversity that the missionaries associated with the corruption of Islam).³⁹

It must be remembered that these missionaries and the CMS existed in a growing bourgeois network of information cast across Europe and linked together through universities eager to study these new details of the living world. It was therefore not easy to separate the "pure" Christian motivations professed by Gobat from Enlightenment science and the application of Salt's "useful arts." Reverend Michael Russell (1781–1848), who was studying at the University of Edinburgh, published a volume entitled *Ethiopia above Egypt* in 1833, which surveyed the increasing number of written accounts on Abyssinia and

37 Charles William Isenberg, *Journals of Rev. Messrs. Isenberg and Krapf, Missionaries of the Church Missionary Society, Detailing Their Proceedings in the Kingdom of Shoa, and Journeys to Other Parts of Abyssinia, in the Years 1839, 1840, 1841, and 1842* (London: Seeley, 1843), vi.

38 Ibid., xi. For example, Isenberg produced spelling books, catechisms, grammar dictionaries, church histories and general histories of Abyssinia, all in Amharic, while additionally compiling vocabularies of the Dengali language, and the Galla (Oromo) language, including a translation of St. Matthew's Gospel. These voluminous efforts cannot help but recall the copious works of Jesuits from an earlier period.

39 Ibid., 107–10, 118. They recommended that Bibles and other writings therefore be written in "Aethiopic" (not Amharic) for distribution among the local populace.

its history.⁴⁰ His work echoes the aforementioned characterizations of Oviedo as a zealous and self-aggrandizing political operative, while reserving a more positive outlook for Páez. The reasoning behind his opinions highlights the strengthening “scientific” perspectives that would begin to follow the new generation of Victorian missionary pioneers: Abyssinia was again re-centered in a field of ancient societies, Carthage, Egypt, and Palestine. Much of Russell’s volume is thus concerned with non-religious information: the geography, civil history, architecture, geology, and zoology of Abyssinia. He places a great deal of emphasis on the access provided to Abyssinia through the military campaigns of Pasha Ali, and his personal reliance on accompanying members of the British army for drawings and measurements of archaeological sites.⁴¹ From his comfortable university armchair, Reverend Russell demonstrated that he was different from Gobat, the fervent, intrepid, self-sacrificing missionary thinking only of Bible distribution; instead, the religious, “civilizing” question could be influenced by both spiritual *and* material techniques (echoing Salt), in necessary cooperation with legal and military force.

As the scientific revolution gained steam in Victorian Britain, the “superior talents” of the British in these areas of science began to manifest under the public control of the army and navy. Upon hearing of the new route to southern Abyssinia traversed by Isenberg and Krapf, the government immediately sent a mission to follow in order to establish secure diplomatic contact with Sahle Selassie (c.1795–1847, r.1813–47), *negus* of Shoa. Under Major William Cornwallis Harris (1807–48) from the Bombay Engineer Corps, the mission managed to penetrate the kingdom by the same route as the missionaries but with new scientific and human resources at its command.⁴² These new capabilities were reflected in its mission:

Efforts zealously directed under the auspices of a liberal government, toward the establishment of a more intimate connection with a Christian

40 Russell, *Nubia and Abyssinia*. We should note, in comparison with the Jesuits (e.g., Alessandro Valignano [1539–1606]), that Russell was both a reverend and a lawyer.

41 Ibid., 9–10. He further explicitly emphasized the good prospects for the CMS work in Ethiopia as a result of these military interventions.

42 William Cornwallis Harris, *The Highlands of Aethiopia* (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1844), v. The embassy also included members of the army, navy, Bombay medical service, a natural historian, an artist, a professional surveyor, an apothecary, a carpenter, and a smith. The appearance of various “scientists” is key; the natural historian Dr. J.R. Roth studied Palestine, echoing Russell. Furthermore, their writings were now also protected internationally by newly issued copyright laws extending from an act of the British Parliament. Ibid., 3.

people, who know even less of the world than the world knows of them—toward the extension of the bounds of geographical and scientific knowledge, the advancement of the best interests of commerce, and the melioration of the lot of some of the less favored portions of the human race.⁴³

Harris proclaimed his debt to Krapf, whom the embassy met upon arrival, for his services in the government's favor, particularly his mastery of languages and for acting as intermediary interpreter for the embassy. Furthermore, he recorded his "personal sense of obligation to the active and pious Missionary of the Church of England." In addition, the geographical information contained in the unpublished recordings of Isenberg's and Krapf's endeavors was so striking and extensive that many of these secular scientists rushed to assist them in consuming the information and publishing usable maps for the territory.⁴⁴ Rather than simply saving immortal souls, a geopolitical objective had emerged in British assistance to this Christian nation, not so different from the earlier Portuguese: the attraction of a native partner in "civilizing" Africa.⁴⁵ Thus the missionary and geographer began to cooperate intensely, based upon the direct observations of the land and experiences with the people held by the former. After another expulsion of missionaries from Ethiopia in 1842, Krapf's attitudes seemed to have hardened along similar lines as his new allies. Writing more than a decade later, in 1855, while linking himself with the new southeastern African missions of David Livingstone (1813–73), Krapf lays bare the frustrations with which his Abyssinian life had left him:

My calling, in which through all perils I have been so mercifully preserved and upheld, enables me to set forth in their true light the moral misery and degradation to which the heathen nations of East Africa have fallen, and to point out the various routes by which these benighted populations may be approached, and the means for their elevation to

43 Ibid., 7.

44 Isenberg, *Journals*, xvi. He claims his information was the basis of James Macqueen's (1778–1870) *Geographical Survey of Africa* (London: B. Fellowes, 1840), which Harris utilizes extensively himself.

45 We can find in Macqueen's volume an explicit formulation of Harris's implicit remarks: "Abyssinia has been since early times a Christian country [...]; they are surrounded on all sides by tribes of the most savage character [...]; a connection with a strong civilized European power may even yet make that state the means of spreading knowledge and civilization through the hitherto most unknown and most impenetrable portion of Central Africa." The primary sources for his discussion are quoted as Bruce and the "Portuguese missionaries." Macqueen, *Survey*, 239.

Christian truth and Christian civilization be conveyed to them [...]; in the memorable words of Dr. Livingstone, “the end of the geographical feat is but the commencement of missionary operations.”⁴⁶

The isolation and difficulties Krapf had faced brought him to the conclusion that regular, stable access was the key to Christianizing Ethiopia, which could only be effected by political and military stability. The vicissitudes of various local conflicts and petty rivalries had destroyed the missionary’s work twice, forcing him from the country, which meant standardization (and therefore stabilization) of the entryways was now the priority. This difficult lesson echoed the experiences of the earlier Jesuits themselves of course.

Krapf’s observations dovetailed with the new scientific spirit of his times. Russell’s volume, which focused on natural sciences and history, appealed to growing secular-scientific communities, who shared the CMS interest in active engagement across the world, but increasingly became organized under the crown. For example, the Geographical Society of London had been founded in 1830 and upgraded to the Royal Geographical Society (RGS) in 1859 by Queen Victoria (1819–1901, r.1837–1901). The efforts of the RGS were directed at accurately mapping the plethora of territories that were increasingly subject to British influence, such as those in Africa and India. Another, the Hakluyt Society, was founded in association with the British Library in 1846 as a learned society dedicated to translating historical documentation on such territories, replacing the independent work of earlier scholars like Johnson.⁴⁷ Mapping, descriptions, and the translation of historical information were now professional trades executed through organizations with highly educated “scientist” members. These upper-class participants of various learned societies were often intertwined, and their viewpoints increasingly came to influence the policy of the British government.

Such scientific innovations, in combination with the previous southward military advances of Muhammad Ali, had significantly eased the difficulties for independent travelers in accessing these unstable routes into Abyssinia. One such adventurer, Mansfield Parkyns (1823–94), published an extensive volume on his travels, dedicated to future prime minister Lord Palmerston, Henry

46 J. Ludwig Krapf, *Travels, Researches, and Missionary Labors during an Eighteen Years’ Residence in Eastern Africa* (London: Trubner and Co., 1860), xlv.

47 For example, see the work of a Portuguese survey of East African and Indian coasts, translated in 1866. Duarte Barbosa, *A Description of the Coasts of East Africa and Malabar in the Beginning of the Sixteenth Century*, trans. Henry Stanley (London: Hakluyt Society, 1866).

John Temple (1784–1865, in office 1855–58 and 1859–65).⁴⁸ Parkyns, like Bruce, represented the non-missionary who traveled simply for his own interest, and his position among this Victorian upper class had given him the intellectual tools to succeed. Like the sedentary Russell, the recordings of this active traveler show the growing scientific discourses common to mid-century Britain, writing on Abyssinian botany, ornithology, medicine, zoology, and biology.⁴⁹ Entering Tigray through Massawa in disguise in 1850, Parkyns's narrative represents an important counterpoint to those of the missionaries. Indeed, Parkyns remains rather hostile to them, suggesting that religion could prevent believers from accrediting truth.⁵⁰ He is similarly critical of the missionaries' activities he observed in Abyssinia, who mocked traditional culture, endlessly distributed Bibles that none could read, and preached boldly in constant disputation with Abyssinian clergy.⁵¹ Parkyns had personally observed an Anglo-German missionary's ejection from the kingdom, and complained that such "bold preaching" should be tempered "with much judgment" and tact; the name of Samuel Gobat was still well loved in Abyssinia due to his embodiment of these traits. Even if religious conversion was the desired aim, Parkyns emphasized that a missionary should adopt Abyssinian life-ways, remain silent on religious questions, and begin openly displaying and educating Abyssinians in various trade skills. Although his volume contains virtually nothing on the Jesuits themselves, his recommended approach echoes Russell's unique valorization of Páez in particular.⁵²

48 Mansfield Parkyns, *Life in Abyssinia: Being Notes Collected during Three Years' Residence and Travels in That Country, Vols. I–III* (New York: D. Appleton Company, 1854), 3. He credits British efforts for his safe passage in Africa: "Spread the great protection of the British Crown and power over the solitary and helpless traveler among nations whose deficient civilization permits them to respect only what they fear."

49 Ibid., 17, 196.

50 Ibid., 14.

51 Ibid., 134, 137–40.

52 Indeed, his description echoes eerily the accommodative efforts of certain Jesuits: "Teach them trades, opening schools (under native masters) [...] inducing young men of influence [...] to visit foreign lands [...] [then you] settle among them [...] [getting] into their ways and feelings [...] make friends with all the great men of the country [...] especially with the priests [...]." The negative aspects of Jesuit missionization are also echoed: "Conscientious readers may condemn this somewhat deceitful way of dealing with them, and I should be the last to recommend it, if any other would be likely to succeed, but experience has taught me that the natives, being excessively ignorant, may be considered in a state of intellectual infancy [...] you are obliged to sweeten the edge of a cup for a sick child [...]" ; ibid., 142.

The critique of this rising secular perspective made itself felt in the increasing cooperation between missionaries like Krapf and the RGS. Krapf's 1860 journal publication contains additional chapters and appendices by Ernst Georg Ravenstein (1834–1913) from the RGS, which reappraise much of the information in Krapf's earlier journals in order to standardize distances, longitudes, and latitudes, in addition to adding tables of commercial imports and exports, comparing European nations' trade with Africa.⁵³ Two decades after Krapf and Isenberg's original publication, it was absolutely clear that now missionary and geographer were working as partners in their Africa policy. They additionally found allies in each other due to their mutual opposition to the Catholic French competition for influence in the region.

On the other hand, through their work with missionaries like Krapf and Livingstone, it is obvious that the secular-scientists who filled the ranks of royal societies, the government, and the military had gained a distinct appreciation for the detailed accounts contained in missionary reports from decades past. In particular, the concerns of exercising power within Abyssinia came to the immediate fore in the final years of the 1860s, under pressure from a new native *negusa negast* known as Tewodros II (c.1818–68, r.1855–68). This warlord had come to power from his position as a desert bandit after an impressive array of military victories and deft political maneuverings in the provinces of northern Ethiopia, until he had gained enough strength and acceptance from the Abyssinian Church to proclaim himself emperor of Ethiopia in 1855. His fascinating story cannot be set forth in these pages; suffice to say that he hoped to augment his growing empire against hostile Egyptian and Oromo forces, appealing to the British for technological assistance and training in similar fashion to previous emperors long before.⁵⁴ When this assistance was not forthcoming, Tewodros imprisoned the British consul Charles Cameron (d.1870) and his party visiting the royal camp in an effort to extort a response from Queen Victoria. Instead, it unfortunately provoked a massive military expedition from Britain to free them.

The manifold preparations for this unique and unprecedented military expedition into the interior of Africa demonstrate the appreciation that Victorian

53 Krapf, *Travels*, xxv–xxxiv.

54 Clements Markham, secretary for the RGS, gives the most detailed and best description of the rise of the bandit-warlord Kasa, his transformation into Tewodros II, and the descent into conflict with the British in Clements R. Markham, *A History of the Abyssinian Expedition* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1869), 60–81. More up-to-date accounts that focus on the Ethiopian perspective can also be found as well: Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia 1855–1974* (London: James Currey, 1991), 27–42; Markus, *History*, 59–72.

geographer-scientists had gained for the Jesuit missionaries and their works. After Queen Victoria's public announcement of the expedition in August 1867, geographical insights into the planning became paramount. By November, the RGS had produced an open paper and discussion reviewing all the available historical evidence to be marshaled in approaching Abyssinia.⁵⁵ The early evidence from Jesuit writings figured strongly in the discussion: the Jesuits are identified as skilled linguists, reading old Abyssinian chronicles and collecting the early history of the region. The paper was generally less positive about the scientific skills of the Jesuits; however, the one exception to this was Páez, who was praised for "great tact and judgment," his ability to "influence minds," his "genius," and his technical skills, which even allowed him to save the emperor's life.⁵⁶ The rebellion against the *negusa negast* Susenyos I was therefore the fault of local rebels attached to backwards traditions rather than "Romish" interference. The discussion ended with a short synopsis of the routes by which the Jesuits entered the country. A few weeks later in the same month, a published report to the British Parliament opened a much larger discussion on the practicalities of the expedition, including a much more detailed review of the geographical entrances taken by both Portuguese and Jesuits.⁵⁷ The British were keen to model their expedition on the former 1541 Portuguese embassy, and they used Jesuit sources like the 1710 version of Lobo's *Travels* to pinpoint the geographic approach. The final 1869 narrative of the expedition's successful liberation of the captives and Tewodros's death by suicide consistently draws the parallel between the "heroic" Portuguese and contemporary British.⁵⁸ Here, Páez was described as "the ablest European that has yet resided in Abyssinia" and the expedition's observed surroundings were constantly compared with the Jesuit descriptions of Lobo and Mendes. Even the commander Robert

55 Clements R. Markham, "The Portuguese Expeditions to Abyssinia in the Fifteenth, Sixteenth, and Seventeenth Centuries," *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London* 38 (1868): 1–12. It is clear that the British implicitly compare their own expedition with the earlier "expeditions" of the Portuguese and their "priests."

56 Ibid., 8–9. Perhaps Páez's only mistake was pointed out as encouraging the emperor to make a public affirmation of and conversion to the Roman Catholic faith.

57 A.C. [Anthony Charles] Cooke, *Routes in Abyssinia* (London: Harrison and Sons, 1867). "Presented to the House of Commons, in Pursuance of the Address Dated November 26, 1867." Printed in favor of Queen Victoria "Her Majesty's Stationery Office." Translations of many Jesuit letters into English are included in this chapter, in addition to laying out the various entrances: the classic route from Massawa, the 1588 route from Zeila, the 1595 beheading of a Jesuit entering Massawa, the 1620 and 1622 entrances at Suakin, and the 1625 entrance of Lobo by Amphilla Bay. Ibid., 27–30.

58 Markham, *History*.

Napier (1810–90) felt a powerful affinity with the Portuguese embassy while marching up the same mountain pass to Senafe and the Ethiopian interior. Although the British refused to leave a garrison in the country after their successful mission, they did transfer a massive weapons cache to Dejazmach Kassa (1837–89) in Tigray, who eventually became the new *negusa negast* Yohannes IV (r.1871–89).⁵⁹ In this way, the sordid and frequently maligned legacy of the Portuguese Jesuits had now become synonymous with the ultimate triumph of Victorian Britain's "Christian civilization" poised at the edge of the Scramble for Africa and the slide into brutal colonialism.

Consequences of the "Rubbing Up" of History

The literary "encounter" here described between Portuguese Jesuits and British Protestants has been shown as a lively and complex point of historical confluence. The lands both knew as Abyssinia became the canvas upon which their experiences echoed across time in the pages of the books they had left behind; a shared "encounter" with a people known poorly in the annals of recorded history. Although their meeting flowed in the direction of time, it is clear that the legacy of each epoch was shaped and reshaped through the "rubbing up" of their common experiences. The first-order effects of their literary encounter could be observed in the writings and appraisals of the Victorians regarding their Jesuit predecessors, and it is clear that these opinions were heavily influenced by Victorian Britain's own political and experiential conditions. At first, the Jesuit experience of Ethiopia was known only darkly, through legends and romantic mysteries, but as the nation matured intellectually, so too did the engagement with the history of these pioneers. The breakout nationalism of Bruce and the anti-political orientation of Gobat's idealized Christian community meant that the Jesuit would remain the anti-hero figure in their literary encounters. The "anti-Romish" spirit of their writings reflects the anti-Catholic politics of eighteenth-century Europe, which ultimately contributed to the Society's suppression. For Gobat in particular, the "rubbing up" of these narratives highlights their stark differentiation, and his dream of a "pure" Christianity independent from the secular sword and, in fact, eschewing it. But both practical experience and the rise of a class of secular (or privatized-Christian)

59 For a more detailed account of this sovereign's reign than is possible here, see Zewde Gabre-Sellassie, *Yohannes IV of Ethiopia: A Political Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975); esp. 24–40 for the complicated political transformations (and obfuscated British aid) that brought him to power.

intellectuals revealed the naïveté of Gobat's vision. Indeed, as Protestant missionaries experienced the scourge of religious rejection and persecution, a distinct appreciation for the secular hand and its "useful arts" grew up in ways not dissimilar to the Jesuits themselves. Rising imperial power and a scientific self-confidence had revitalized the national spirit that drove Bruce's investigations, and rather than receiving ridicule, missionary skills could be well placed in the service of this "greater glory." An archetype of the "good Jesuit" emerged in these writings, politically skilled, educated in science, almost as an analogue to those Victorian missionaries so valuable to the royal endeavor. The rubbing of their encounter meant that while the historical image of the Jesuits had so influenced the Protestant relationship with Abyssinia, the Protestant relationship with Abyssinia simultaneously influenced the historical re-imagining of the Jesuits.

Yet an additional observation must be set forth here, as a conjecture far beyond the boundaries of this chapter. Indeed, the rubbing between these histories has contributed to a secondary-order effect that may not be completely clear at the outset. For the Victorians themselves, and their Jesuit antecedents, both took on assumptions about their world through the transmission of historical information and intellectual encounter. This "rubbing up" against sources from earlier times contributed to certain characterizations about an "Ethiopia" that was known to "exist" somewhere in the unknown tracts of Africa. These legends, ancient tales, kept Europeans coming back, searching for the Christian Ethiopia that had been encountered yet recorded only in dusty tomes. "Ethiopia" as a place may indeed have existed more surely in the minds of these Europeans than in any particular set of local conditions or cultural memories. For the *negusa negasts* themselves, the "Ethiopian" identity may simply have been a strategic concept used to make connections with the outside world, a diplomatic tool in gaining resources for development. Throughout its history, a cohesive Ethiopia seems to have shifted and dissolved regularly before being revived through particular foreign expectations, themselves crafted through such historical flashes of unity. When Bruce, Salt, and Gobat arrived, they were looking for a place they knew to exist because the Jesuits had known it before. Its history was recorded, its cultural traditions and religious practices inscribed. Searching for a literary image among the realities of this world, with technical and intellectual assets to donate in hand, would certainly encourage the emergence of eager allies claiming to be just the image desired. While the *negusa negast* remained a titular puppet without note, he was the agent constantly sought by the Victorians due to the fact that the Jesuits had known and treated with him. Tewodros II stood up to fill that office upon which foreign visitors of import increasingly called. This leads to the

possible conclusion that the very idea of Abyssinia, of modern Ethiopia, was a creation sustained over time, at least in part by the rubbing up of these historical narratives across the eras. This literary encounter forged living memories of a place and a people that may have vanished entirely otherwise. Therefore, this encounter between Jesuits and Protestants, the rubbing up of their histories, operated in a network of intellectual and material incentives; those same dynamics that create and power “imagined communities.”

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