PART 4

*Encounters in Madagascar, Congo,
and Fernando Poo*

Jesuits and Protestants in Nineteenth-century Madagascar

Jocelyn Rabeson, S.J.

This chapter examines the encounter between Jesuits and Protestant missionaries in Madagascar in the nineteenth century. This encounter unfolded over four distinct periods: (1) the establishment of Christianity between 1818 and 1836; (2) the persecution of Christians between 1836 and 1861; (3) the return of religious liberty between 1861 and 1896; and (4) Christianity during the early colonial period between 1896 and 1900. Each of these different periods in turn resulted from the decision of the Merina kingdom's monarchs¹ to embrace or reject Christianity, which affected and shaped the relationship between Jesuit and Protestant missionaries and their respective activities. The chapter follows the same chronology of events by narrating the encounter between Catholic missionaries, namely the Jesuits, and those of the Protestant Church, namely the London Missionary Society (LMS), in the central area of Madagascar, the Merina kingdom where all missionary activities began and from where they spread throughout the island.²

1 These monarchs are: Radama I (r.1810–28), Ranavalona I (r.1828–61), Radama II (r.1861–63), Rasoherina (r.1863–68), Ranavalona II (r.1868–83), and Ranavalona III (r.1883–96).

2 It is worth noting that the country's first contact with Christianity goes as far back as the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In the nineteenth century, the desire of all missionaries was to enter the inland where some progress was already taking place in various aspects of society. The main source of this chapter is Adrien Boudou's (1876–1945) two-volume book on the history of the Jesuits in the nineteenth-century Madagascar, which is supplemented by the history of Protestant missions as narrated by some Protestant missionaries themselves. Boudou's work is based on the books, diaries, and correspondence of the early Jesuit missionaries as well as the writings of the early Protestant missionaries. Taken together, the two volumes consequently present a comprehensive view of the Jesuit mission in the nineteenth century. The Protestant missionaries' writings, on the other hand, cover the Protestant missions throughout the nineteenth century. See Adrien Boudou, *Les Jésuites à Madagascar au XIX siècle*, 2 vols. (Paris: Gabriel Beauchesne et Fils, 1940).

Establishment of Christianity and Persecution of Christians

In 1817, the British government, through Sir Robert Farquhar (1776–1830), governor of Mauritius, and Radama I (1793–1828, 1810–28), then king of Madagascar, entered into an agreement whereby the king would abolish the slave trade in return for the governor's military support and other advantages. This agreement was actually never implemented and by 1820 it had been completely forgotten. However, the governor was still anxious to renew it. It was in the context of new efforts to renew the 1817 agreement that the LMS came to the country.

The first LMS missionaries, Thomas Bevan (c.1796–1819) and David Jones (1796–1841),³ together with their respective families, entered the east coast of Madagascar in 1818 for a short exploration. Unfortunately, Jones's wife and daughter died of fever shortly after entering the island, and Bevan and his family succumbed to the same fate in 1819.⁴ Thus, after a short vacation to Mauritius to recover his health, Jones ultimately traveled to the central area of Madagascar with James Hastie (1786–1826), the governor's agent who was appointed to Antananarivo in view of re-establishing the treaty. Radama I welcomed them on September 4, 1820, renewed the treaty and, upon learning of the object of Jones's visit, made a request in a letter to the LMS Board of Directors: "I request you to send me, if convenient, as many missionaries as you may deem proper, together with their families if they desire it; provided you send skillful artisans to make my people workmen and good Christians."⁵ Jones began his mission by building a school,⁶ and he was soon followed by other pastors and artists, including David Griffiths (1792–1863), who became his close collaborator.

During this period, the missionaries were under the king's protection and they managed to make a great deal of progress. There were already three Christian schools in Madagascar by 1823—the principal aim of which was to

3 Thomas Bevan and David Jones's mission to Madagascar was triggered by their mentor, one Dr. Phillips, in the seminary. Dr. Phillips himself once asked his students "who will go as a missionary to Madagascar?" Jones and Bevan at once responded, each for himself, "I will go." See Richard Lovett, *The History of the London Missionary Society, 1795–1895* (London: Oxford University Press, 1899), 674.

4 See *ibid.*, 675.

5 *Ibid.*, 676. The letter is dated October 29, 1820. It is to be noted that part of the agreement was the sending of Malagasy youth to Mauritius and Britain for instruction. See also William Ellis, *Three Visits to Madagascar during the Years 1853–1854–1856* (London: John Murray, 1858), 1–3.

6 School would play an important role in the mission of the LMS. According to the second report of the Madagascar Missionary School Society of 1828, by the same year "there were in the capital and surrounding country thirty-seven schools with forty-four teachers and 2309 scholars"; see Lovett, *History of LMS*, 683.

train the natives as missionaries of their own country—and on February 22 in the following year, Radama granted the missionaries permission to preach in the local Malagasy language. Jones would preach the first sermon two days later.⁷ On the following day, a “communion service was administered for the first time in Malagasy.”⁸ Work on translating the Bible into Malagasy, meanwhile, began in 1820, with the New Testament translation being completed by 1825; the full translation was complete, printed, and distributed in 1835.

All this was to change, however, following the death of Radama I and the accession of Ranavalona I in 1828 (1778–1861, r.1828–61). Although the new queen initially showed some tolerance toward the proselytism of the LMS and even allowed baptism and the celebration of the last supper,⁹ she eventually came to realize that adherence to Christianity posed a danger to her monarchy. As a result, at the end of 1831, when the progress of Christianity was beginning to alarm the authorities,¹⁰ the queen became increasingly hostile to the missionaries doing anything other than artisanal and educational work.¹¹ There were three main reasons for this anxiety, each of which was connected to the other. The first was that the queen saw the Christian religion as an external ideology that contradicted the fundamental values and beliefs of the Malagasy people. The second was that Christian education had begun to plant the seeds of democratization¹² in the minds of the natives—including leaders and military officers, as well as simple citizens—and this posed a threat to the monarchical ideology that the queen and the oligarchy wanted to protect and consolidate. Third, as a result of the first two factors, converting to Christianity not only became a form of political and religious protest but also an acceptance of foreign ancestors instead of faithfulness to native ancestors venerated by the Malagasy people and from whom the queen’s sacred authority flowed.¹³ This raised the possibility that the queen could lose her “prestige sacré,”¹⁴ which had previously been respected and venerated by the people.

7 Ibid., 677.

8 Ibid., 678.

9 See *ibid.*, 689.

10 Micheline Rasoamiamanana, “Le rejet du christianisme au sein du royaume de Madagascar (1835–1861),” in *Madagascar et le Christianisme*, ed. Bruno Hübsch (Antananarivo: Editions Ambozontany, 1993), 217–40, here 222.

11 Lovett, *History of LMS*, 688.

12 Adherence to Christianity required a rupture from the past and from the community.

13 Rasoamiamanana, “Le rejet du christianisme au sein du royaume de Madagascar,” 222–24.

14 A Malagasy monarch was considered a living divinity. His or her legitimacy stemmed from his or her enthronement to the *vato masina* (sacred stone) and the *Hasina* (offerings) from the people.

Consequently, while acknowledging the good things done, and allowing the missionaries to follow their customs, the queen urged the missionaries to abide by Malagasy laws and prohibited the Malagasy people from practicing the Christian religion.¹⁵ On March 1, 1835, the queen gave an official *kabary* (proclamation or speech) in which she announced that native Christians would face the death penalty for practicing the Christian faith.

This was the start of the persecution of Christians in Madagascar. Christians endured torture and executions for the next twenty-five years: many of them were tied, wrapped in *tsihy* (a traditional rug) and thrown down a hill, while others were beheaded. Some missionaries left the capital at the center of the island and moved to the coast, others stayed in Mauritius, and others simply returned to Britain. Some would go back to the coastal area and attempt to enter the capital again.¹⁶ To this day, the Malagasy people in general, and the Protestant church in particular, celebrate the martyrdom of Rasalama (c.1810–37), a Protestant woman, who was executed by the sword on August 14, 1837.

While the persecution was underway in central Madagascar, Catholic missionaries began to engage in missionary work in the north and east of the country. In 1832, Fr. Gabriel Henri Jérôme de Solages (1786–1832), who had been appointed apostolic prefect in charge of Bourbon, Madagascar, and the Oceania and Pacific islands since 1829,¹⁷ disembarked in Toamasina on the east coast with the aim of meeting the queen to suggest building a high school for girls. However, after receiving advice from some Protestant pastors,¹⁸ the queen rejected Solages' request.

When Solages died on December 8, 1832,¹⁹ he was replaced by Fr. Pierre Dalmond (1800–47)—not a Jesuit—who had already visited the small

15 Letter addressed to the missionaries on February 26, 1835, a translation of which can be found in Lovett, *History of LMS*, 694–95.

16 It is to be noted that, in his two-volume history of the Jesuits, Boudou critically recounts the story of the mission of the LMS as well as the persecution of Protestants based on the publications of Protestant missionaries such as James Sibree (1836–1929). Boudou sees the combination of politics and religion in the entrance of LMS into the island. His description, although accurate, seems to show the tension between the British and the French, which also meant the Protestants and the Catholics respectively. See Boudou, *Les jésuites à Madagascar*, 1:229–34.

17 See Boudou, *Les jésuites à Madagascar*, 1:9–10.

18 The letter was written by David Griffiths, David Johns (1794–1848), and Joseph John Freeman (1794–1851) of the LMS; see *ibid.*, 27–28.

19 *Ibid.*, 18–33.

island of Sainte Marie three times.²⁰ Dalmond was named apostolic prefect of Madagascar in 1842 and immediately decided to go to Europe to look for help, to which request the Society of Jesus responded positively, and he returned to Madagascar with six Jesuits.²¹ These Jesuits worked in the north of the country in an area known as Nosy Be. One of the many activities in which they were involved was the instruction of young Malagasy children in La Réunion, particularly at the Jesuit residence called La Ressource.²² One of these children was Basilide Rahidy (1839–83), son of the prince of the Betsimisaraka ethnic group known as Linta. Rahidy became the first Malagasy to be ordained Jesuit priest in 1874.²³

When Dalmond died in 1847, the Catholic mission still remained in the islands where small Christian communities had started to develop.²⁴ It was only in 1855 that a Jesuit priest, Marc Finaz (1815–80), came to Antananarivo at the center of Madagascar. Due to the persecution underway, he changed his name to Hervier, which was his mother's name, and introduced himself as the secretary to the French trader Joseph Lambert (1824–73), a friend of the queen. Finaz managed to celebrate Mass on July 8, 1855 before the queen's son and likely successor to the throne.²⁵ Through the prince, he secured permission to stay in the country, and two other Jesuit priests, Louis Jouen (1805–72) and Joseph Webber (1819–64), would later come to join him. The two entered Antananarivo with changed names and introduced themselves as a medical assistant and pharmacist respectively. With such disguises, they were allowed into the city despite the advice of Reverend William Ellis (1794–1872), the director of the LMS at the time, who had urged the prince to prevent the French from

20 The trips took place in July 1837, June 1838, and April 1839. It is believed that he baptized over a thousand natives during these trips.

21 The six Jesuits were Fathers Pierre Cotain (1795–1871), Ambroise Neyraguet (1799–1861), Joseph Bobiller (1813–70), Romain Dénieu (1800–70), and Brothers Charles Remacle and Félicien Jouffre. See Boudou, *Les jésuites à Madagascar*, 1:97.

22 La Ressource, Dalmond's project, was supposed to serve as a place both of rest for future missionaries to Madagascar and of instruction of young Malagasy brought by the French government for training in fields such as agriculture, catechism, school administration, and so on. Initially, the project failed, but it was revived by later missionaries. See the letter of Fr. Dalmond to his parents on January 18, 1845 in Boudou, *Les jésuites à Madagascar*, 1:98–99.

23 Bruno Hübsch, "Difficultés des Missions Catholiques à Madagascar (1820–1861)," in Hübsch, *Madagascar et le Christianisme*, 241–56, here 242–53.

24 Fr. Louis Jouen and Fr. Marc Finaz, who would be the first Jesuit missionaries to enter the interior of the island or the capital of Madagascar, were appointed apostolic prefects of Madagascar and the small islands respectively in 1850.

25 Boudou, *Les jésuites à Madagascar*, 1:277.

gaining influence in the country. Ellis himself had visited Toamasina twice (in 1853 and in 1854), but his request to reach Antananarivo had been denied on both occasions. When his request was finally granted, he decided to go back to Madagascar in 1856 where he met Lord Clarendon (1800–70), then foreign minister, who told him about his meeting with Lambert and about the letter of Prince Rakoto (who would later become King Radama II) to Napoleon III (1808–73). The main goal of Ellis's visit to Antananarivo was to fight against French (meaning "Jesuit" and "Catholic") influence.²⁶ Finaz and Webber remained in the country for a few months, during which time they witnessed the unsuccessful attempt to overthrow the queen on June 20, 1857. After being accused of helping to plot the coup, the two men were forced to leave the country.

The Return of Religious Freedom

Ranavalona I's son, Radama II, took over the throne after her death. Shortly after taking power, Radama wrote to his European friends in the coastal area and to others in Europe,²⁷ declaring religious freedom in Madagascar. From then on, Protestants and Catholics were free to practice their faith and seek converts, and they hurried to the capital to take advantage of the newly proclaimed freedom. Among the Jesuits who came the same year were Webber (September 23, 1861) and Jouen (October 12, 1861); they were later followed by many more Catholic missionaries, including the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny. In a meeting with Webber the day after his arrival, the king expressed his openness to Protestants and Catholics as well as his inclination toward Catholicism. Webber summarized the king's remarks as follows: "Come, preach, establish yourselves openly and as soon as possible; be the first to establish yourselves, and you will have a lot of influence."²⁸

However, the Jesuits discovered that, apart from cultural challenges, the most difficult obstacle to the evangelization of the Malagasy people was the "Protestant heresy" that had reached the center of the country before their own arrival. They acknowledged that, until the return of religious freedom, the

26 See *ibid.*, 1:285–89.

27 Boudou related that Radama II wrote one letter to Queen Victoria (r.1837–1901), four to the governor of Mauritius, and three to Rev. Le Brun, head of the Protestant missionaries in Port Louis; he also wrote to the governor of the Island of Reunion, Baron Darricau, and to Laborde as well; see Boudou, *Les jésuites à Madagascar*, 1:371.

28 *Ibid.*, 373, my translation.

Malagasy people had only known the form of Christianity proclaimed by the LMS. Now that freedom was back, the missionaries wanted to resume the mission from where they had left it twenty-five years ago and revive their work.²⁹

The news of Ranavalona I's death and her son's accession to the throne reached Ellis as well as the LMS Board of Directors. Meeting on October 14, 1861, the board appointed a "sub-committee to confer with Mr. Ellis upon the whole case." At the same time, they also called on the British government to "use their utmost influence to prevent the establishment of a French protectorate in that island, should such a project be entertained."³⁰ Ellis reached Antananarivo in June 1862. He was later followed by other missionaries with different talents, including medical doctors, printers, and schoolmasters. In addition to the work of evangelization, one of their main tasks was the construction of memorial churches on the sites where the native Christians had lost their lives during the persecution. The Catholic missionaries who were already at work were seen as "agents pursuing the invariable policy of Rome. They denounced Protestantism, they attempted to secure the direction of affairs, and they showed no scruples in the means they adopted to secure their ends."³¹

The first point of friction between the Protestant and Catholic missionaries took place over schools. The Jesuits wanted to recruit and send children to La Ressource, but they had been prevented from doing so. The reason for this was that the elders were still under the influence of the British (Protestants). Fr. Boy claimed that "they [the Protestants] do everything possible to morally prevent people from coming to us, for fear that they might become Catholics."³² Indeed, former Protestant recruits who wanted to join the Catholic Church were intimidated or accused of being paid by the Jesuits. Protestant pupils made fun of the Catholics by calling them *les priants d'une seule case* (those who pray in one single room) whereas they, *lecteurs de la bible* (readers of the Bible), had multiple houses in which to meet.³³ Despite such antagonism, however, in the early stages of their mission, there were also examples of cooperation, with Jesuits and other Catholic Christians being treated at a hospital that was run by Protestants, for example.

The Jesuits lamented the French abstention from Madagascar, as a result of which the Protestants were reaping the fruits. At the same time, they knew that they had the king's sympathy and support. The main proof of this was

²⁹ See *ibid.*, 395.

³⁰ Lovett, *History of LMS*, 712.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 714.

³² *Ibid.*, 406, being a quote from a letter of Fr. Boy to Fr. Jouen, written on February 11, 1862.

³³ *Ibid.*, 407.

the private celebration of the Eucharist with the king and his wife before his coronation, the blessing of the crown, and the crowning itself, which was done after the Mass by Jouen assisted by Finaz and Mr. Jean Laborde (1805–78).³⁴

But this support did not last for long. After the accession of Radama II, French and British interest in the island had increased significantly, and both countries sent their respective ambassadors to Madagascar. With the signing of a treaty between France and Madagascar on September 12, 1862, the advantage initially went to the French government and the Catholic mission. At the same time, internal wrangles within the royal family, especially between the prime minister's family, which was close to the late queen and to the friends of the king known as *menamaso*, culminated in the prime minister's assassination of the king and his friends on May 11, 1863. The king's wife, Rabodo (1814–68), took oath on the following day and became the queen, taking the name Rasoherina (r.1863–68).³⁵

The change of guard would also change the missionary situation. The newly crowned queen and her government revoked the treaty signed with France in 1862. The treaty, which allowed foreigners to explore the island's riches, was seen as a threat to the oligarchs who had monopolized trade in the country. The decision led to tension between France and Madagascar. Through its ambassador, France threatened to leave the country and withdraw all its missionaries. The missionaries, however, unanimously refused to leave their missions.

The aftermath of Radama II's assassination did not favor the Jesuits' missionary work even though they were still recording an increase in the number of people baptized in 1864 (indeed, the harvest was so bountiful that Protestants would come to witness Catholic baptisms out of curiosity). Instead, the reign of Rasoherina saw the beginning of the government's move toward the British in terms of foreign policy and the Protestants in terms of internal policy. The prime minister and his siblings even withdrew their children from the Catholic school and sent them to a Methodist one.³⁶

Protestantism as State Religion

After Rasoherina's death, her cousin's sister, Ramoma (1829–83), took over the throne under the name Ranavalona II (r.1868–83) and the move toward Christianity, especially Protestantism, continued to gather pace among the

34 Ibid., 455–56.

35 See *ibid.*, 481.

36 Boudou, *Les jésuites à Madagascar*, 2:8.

leadership. On September 3, 1868, the queen's coronation day, *sampy* (idols) such as *kelimalaza* (symbol of royal fame) and *manjakatsiroa* (symbol of the one and only ruler) were removed from the scene and, instead, the Bible took the place of honor on the right side of the queen. A Protestant cult began inside the palace. The public market on Sunday was banned that same year.³⁷ Over ten years later, when recalling the story of the queen's conversion to Christianity and the building of a palace church, the prime minister insisted that "no one led her to do these things except the Spirit of God alone."³⁸

The climax of this Protestant inclination was the baptism of the queen, which happened at the same time as that of her prime minister, Rainilaiarivony (1828–96, in office 1864–95), on February 29, 1869, and was carried out by a native pastor named Andriambelo (1829–1904). On the same day, the divorce between the prime minister and his legitimate wife was witnessed by other Protestant pastors.³⁹ The baptism of the queen and the prime minister accelerated the expansion of Christianity in Madagascar, which had already been embraced by government officers in the capital and in the surrounding villages.⁴⁰ The event was followed by the destruction of all idols and amulets owned by the people in the territory as well as the sending of evangelists as instructed by the queen and the laying of the first stone of a temple within the palace area. Jesuits welcomed the destruction of idols, but criticized the idea of a state church. For their part, Protestant missionaries denied any involvement in the creation of a state church.⁴¹ The Protestants claimed to be promoting a policy of non-conformism, but, at the same time, they also acknowledged that it was not beyond the realm of possibility that those occupying positions of authority

37 The main architect of the "Palace Church," the construction of which began on July 20, 1869, was the prime minister, and was interpreted by many as being a purely political act. See Boudou, *Les jésuites à Madagascar*, 2:37–40.

38 Lovett, *History of LMS*, 743. On April 8, 1880, the church was opened. Representatives from some Protestant churches attended the event, but Catholics and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel did not. During the ceremony, the prime minister recalled the story of the queen's conversion to Christianity and the building of the church within the palace whose main motive was "the queen's desire that her subjects should know the true God and the Lord Jesus Christ, and that the praying should never depart from her kingdom."

39 Ibid. This incident was related by Protestant missionaries such as James Sibree and Gustave Mondain (1872–1954).

40 Françoise Raison-Jourde, "Dérives constantiniennes et querelles religieuses (1869–1883)," in Hübsch, *Madagascar et le Christianisme*, 277–98, here 277.

41 See Boudou, *Les jésuites à Madagascar*, 2:47. Here, Boudou is quoting from the accounts of LMS missionaries in LMS, *Ten Years' Review of Mission in Madagascar, 1870–1880* (Antananarivo: LMS, 1880), 69–76, 72.

would interfere in the life of the church. They even expressed their concern that the increase in the numbers of native Christians might have come from the tendency of the Malagasy people to follow what the *lehibe* (elders or those in authority) do or direct them to do.⁴² Yet, in their report on the mission, Protestant missionaries clearly showed their enthusiasm toward the building of a church within the palace:

The Palace Church constituted a class by itself. It grew exactly like the other churches, but exerted a unique influence because [it is] situated within the palace, and attended by the queen, the prime minister, and many high officials. Yet it never gained precedence, or exercised undue authority over the rest; but in a Christian and unassuming manner always showed itself ready to assist the poorer and weaker churches, and co-operated heartily with the native missionary society in its efforts to send the Gospel to the heathen.⁴³

For the French government, the death of Rasoherina and the accession of Ranavalona II signified the decline of its influence and, for the Catholic mission, the beginning of its hassles and persecution.⁴⁴ One incident serves to confirm this observation. Toward the end of 1868, the queen attended the official inauguration of one of the four memorial churches built by the Protestant missionaries for the victims of the persecution. For the sake of inclusivity, it was agreed that she would also attend the inauguration of a Catholic church that was being built at the same time. By the end of February 1869, the church was ready for the inaugural celebration. The queen attended the inauguration that took place on March 25 and was welcomed by the apostolic prefect, Fr. Jouen, and members of the French consulate. However, the ceremony had hardly begun when the prime minister's cousin, Rainimaharavo, who was the chief secretary of state, ordered the convoy to vacate the tribune because the queen had to leave. The queen herself did not show any resistance in following the order; she immediately stood up and showed her intention to leave.⁴⁵

The year 1868 (death of Rasoherina and accession of Ranavalona II to the throne) saw the beginning of Catholic missions around the suburbs of Antananarivo. These areas were between one and two hours' walk from the center of the capital around the hill where the palace was located and where the

42 Lovett, *History of LMS*, 727–31.

43 LMS, *Ten Years' Review*, 116 quoted in Lovett, *History of LMS*, 739–40.

44 Boudou, *Les jésuites à Madagascar*, 2:47–48.

45 Ibid., 53–56.

Jesuit mission had stood since its beginning. Finaz was one of the Jesuit pioneers in these extension missions. As he pioneered this new Catholic initiative, he encountered opposition from government officials, the Protestants, and, especially, Rainimaharavo. During an audience with the prime minister in the presence of Rainimaharavo and others on May 6, 1869, Finaz said,

I do not name anyone; but our disciples are treated like rebels for the mere fact of religion, judges are sent to them and they are taken by the hand to prevent them from joining us and they are led to the Protestants by telling them that it is in their service.⁴⁶

The acquisition of land for church and school construction also became increasingly difficult for the Catholics. Despite the 1868 treaty that allowed missionaries to acquire land freely through negotiation with landlords, the government still imposed rules that required them to seek government approval. On November 9, 1871, for example, the apostolic prefect and some priests were summoned to the French consulate, in the presence of the consul Laborde and his chancellor, Albert Campan, to hear a formal instruction from the prime minister through his envoy: "If in the villages where you are called people meet in a house of some Malagasy and there is no church for that purpose, it is not necessary to inform the government. But if you or the Malagasy want to build a church, you have to inform."⁴⁷

The Jesuits denounced this new regulation. They reminded those who acted on behalf of the queen of the latter's address on the day of her coronation in which she said she was not against any "prayer," by which she meant religion. Yet, government officials would continue to use their political position or concurrently hold a church position and a political or military one in order to intimidate the Catholics.⁴⁸ Victoire Rasoamanarivo often intervened with the prime minister on behalf of her fellow Catholics who needed protection against the unfriendly behavior of some Protestants.

The situation of education in Madagascar is particularly revealing with regard to the nature of the Jesuit-Protestant encounter. At the return of religious

46 See Boudou, *Les jésuites à Madagascar*, 2:68, my translation.

47 P. Delbosc, "Rapport du 3 Février 1881 à l'œuvre de la Propagande de la foi," as cited in Boudou, *Les jésuites à Madagascar*, 2:69, my translation.

48 See Lovett, *History of LMS*, 748; interestingly, however, not only did Prime Minister Rainilaiarivony, who had embraced Protestantism at the same time as the queen, have a close relationship with his own daughter-in law, Victoire Rasoamanarivo (1848–94), who was a fervent Catholic; he also decided to send his own son Antoine Randrava to France to receive a Catholic education.

freedom, the Merina kingdom did not have any legislation on the schooling of children, and missionaries, such as the LMS, took care of teaching Malagasy children. Only in 1876 and 1879 did Ranaivalona II ask people to register and send their children to school. At this point, the Protestant teaching program enjoyed government favor and was in fact given an edge in the competition for positions like those of governors, state officers, pastors, and evangelists. The Catholic mission program, on the other hand, was simply tolerated because of the 1868 treaty that had allowed Jesuits to open schools. In a review of their mission, Protestants showed that they were aware of the advantage that had been granted to them by the political system. They were also aware of the Jesuit reaction to such favors. In a rare show of solidarity, they renounced further assistance from the government until a just and equitable education system could be adopted. Unfortunately, such a system never materialized. On the contrary, Jesuits witnessed the queen assisting at a graduation at the College Théologique of the LMS during which she signed and distributed the issued certificates. She later assigned the graduates to some important offices in her government.⁴⁹

At the center of Protestant education was the Bible, which was taught from a Protestant perspective.⁵⁰ Catholic children who were sent by their parents to Protestant schools were not allowed to manifest any association with their own church. The Jesuits were accused of jealousy when they tried to fight against this system. The conflict was not only among the missionaries or Catholic and Protestant teachers but also among their respective students and their parents, and it often turned violent. Historian Adrien Boudou relates a number of incidents where Catholic and Protestant students engaged in violence, most of them outside Antananarivo. He also mentions a request by some Catholic parents to the queen, asking not to be separated from their children when going to church simply because they were Catholics as their children, who studied in a Protestant school, had to go to a Protestant church.⁵¹

Both Protestant missionaries and Jesuits also became involved in activities such as writing the history of Madagascar and of their respective missions, as well as scientific works. The Jesuits, for example, became known in Madagascar because of the work of Fr. Désiré Roblet (1828–1914), who produced a geographical map of the territory. The Jesuits also took up the work of Laborde (consul of France) after his death in 1878, which involved constructing a meteorological observatory.

49 See *ibid.*, 143–47.

50 *Ibid.*, 148.

51 See *ibid.*, 152.

In the same period, two separate publications—one Catholic, the other Protestant—were used by the Catholic and Protestant missionaries to launch attacks against each other. In 1874, Jesuit Pierre Caussèque began a review called *Resaka* (Conversation). The mission took this initiative in response to the Protestant review *Teny soa* (Good words), which had already begun nine years earlier, in 1865, and was used by Protestant missionaries to attack Catholicism. Using fictional stories, Caussèque countered the Protestant attacks by describing what he considered to be the essence of the Catholic faith and of Malagasy Catholicism, while also exposing what he judged to be Protestant errors. Eventually, the Protestants had to cease their attack on the Catholic faith and on the Malagasy Catholic faithful. One of the principal attractions in *Resaka* was the fables written by Fr. Rahidy, the first Malagasy Jesuit priest, which attacked the prime minister's family. Out of anger, the prime minister would refer to him by using the name of his tribe, *Sakalava*.⁵²

Despite the tense atmosphere, Christianity developed on both denominational sides for the next twenty-two years, not only in terms of numbers but especially in terms of diversity. Antananarivo, where the palace is located, became the center of missionary activity. Missionaries were first sent there before they could spread around the country. The sacred character of the monarch and his or her protection ensured people's adherence to Christianity. It was because of this that priests and pastors competed around the throne in controversies, songs, and teachings. In addition to the LMS and the Catholics, a number of other Christian denominations arrived in the country during this time. The Anglican Church, represented by the Church Missionary Society (CMS), had already begun work in the northern Madagascar in 1862, and in 1866, two Lutheran pastors arrived in Antananarivo to learn the local language. A year later, after negotiation with the LMS, they were allowed to evangelize in the southern part of the country and in the region of Vakinankaratra, 150 kilometers from the capital. The Quakers also came to the country in the same period to join the LMS in the area of education. They formed the beginnings of L'Église des Amis, later translated in Malagasy as Frenjy.

The government's adoption of Protestantism as the state religion affected the Catholics politically. Many government officials whose children had been baptized in the Catholic Church and educated in the Catholic schools were

52 Ibid., 165. The relationship between tribes in Madagascar in the nineteenth century must be understood in the context of the unification of the country that was begun by the Merina kingdom and supported by France, and which other tribes such as the Sakalava were against. Fr. Rahidy's father was among those who fought against the unification in 1830. He was captured, brought to Antananarivo, and had to redeem his liberty.

forced to remove their children from their schools. As a result, from this time onward, the Catholic population in Madagascar was composed of ordinary citizens, whereas the Protestant Church was associated with the members of the country's elite and their families.⁵³ Schools constituted one of the major means of evangelization. The LMS controlled the education of the leaders' children. The best students were recruited into their theological institute and later became evangelists. The LMS also opened their first hospital in 1865, which was followed by a medical academy that was opened in collaboration with the Lutherans in 1885. Schooling or education, according to historian Françoise Raison-Jourde, not only aimed to integrate children into the church but also to prepare them to become elites for the state.⁵⁴

The Two Wars and Colonization

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, during the reign of Ranavalona III (1861–1917, r.1883–96), the tension between the French and the Malagasy government, historically referred to as the “Franco-Hova”⁵⁵ conflict, was growing in intensity. On the one hand, the French wanted to claim what they called *droits historiques* (historical rights).⁵⁶ On the other hand, the Malagasy government was determined to keep both its independence and sovereignty over the country. The tension led to two wars in 1883–85 and 1894–96.

As a result of a French attack in the northwest of Madagascar on May 25, 1883, all French citizens in the territory, including missionaries, were asked to leave the country immediately. The Jesuits went to seek the intervention of the Anglican bishop of the time, Rev. Robert Kestell-Cornish (1824–1909), after being denied an audience with the prime minister. Although the bishop declared himself powerless, he did ensure that the Jesuits' letter was sent to the prime minister. But this too was in vain.⁵⁷ Catholic missionaries, including the Jesuits, the Christian School Brothers, and the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny, left

53 See Haja Rajoelison and Bruno Hübsch, “L’instauration de la liberté religieuse (1861–1868),” in Hübsch, *Madagascar et le Christianisme*, 259–76, here 273–76; see also Lovett, *History of LMS*, 783–91.

54 See Raison-Jourde, “Dérives constantiniennes et querelles religieuses,” 292.

55 Hova can have two meanings: first, it indicates the higher caste within the Merina ethnic group, especially those in the elite position; second, it may also indicate the Merina ethnic group itself.

56 See Boudou, *Les jésuites à Madagascar*, 2:230. These are the rights to ownership over the buildings and lands as well as the freedom of trade.

57 *Ibid.*, 258.

Antananarivo on May 30, 1883. According to Boudou, the prime minister was not opposed to Catholic missionaries staying in the country, but he was under pressure from those surrounding him, including a hostile population and the Protestants.⁵⁸ The fate of the Jesuits who went to the regions of Fianarantsoa and Ambositra in the south was even worse. Some were imprisoned before being sent away, others fell sick on the road, and two died while on the journey.

The only positive thing to come out of the missionaries' departure was the fact that their absence forced lay Malagasy Catholics to take charge of the missionary work. On the eve of their departure, Caussègue gathered all Christian leaders of the different movements that would later form the Catholic Union and instructed them on how they could continue to lead prayer in the church, to instruct children in the school, and so on. Victoire Rasoamanarivo, who would be beatified by John Paul II (r.1978–2005) in 1989, was among the leaders during this crucial time.⁵⁹ The departure seemed to be a victory for the Protestant missionaries and their faithful. The latter would invite Catholics to join them. Sometimes they did this using threats, accusing Catholics of being friends of traitors, meaning France and its citizens, and especially, missionaries. Despite the threats, however, under Victoire's leadership, the Catholic Union became ever stronger and was able to sustain the life of their church around Antananarivo and in the south of the country.

The missionaries returned to Antananarivo after the signing of a peace treaty between France and Madagascar on December 17, 1885, which was later ratified in Antananarivo. The Jesuits resumed their work with other missionaries. Fr. Jean Baptiste Cazet (1827–1918), formerly apostolic prefect, also came back from France as Mgr. Cazet. While still in France, he was consecrated bishop and appointed apostolic vicar of the Madagascar mission. Madagascar became an apostolic vicariate and now had a bishop as its head. Cazet entered Tamatave on April 5, 1886. During Holy Week, he was received with great joy by the faithful in Antananarivo under the leadership of Victoire Rasoamanarivo. The celebration of Easter on April 25 seemed to conclude the return of the missionaries. It was followed by the bishop's official visit to the prime minister.⁶⁰ Subsequently, the Jesuits resumed all the works they had left behind: the school, the royal observatory, topography, research in philology and history, construction of the bishop's house in Antananarivo and the cathedral in Fianarantsoa.

58 Ibid., 261.

59 Ibid., 275.

60 See *ibid.*, 291–300.

The mission's resumption after two years of absence was not without challenges and difficulties, however. Politically, article 1 of the newly signed treaty allowed the French government to represent Madagascar in foreign relations. From then on, France would have a so-called *résident général* in Antananarivo for that purpose. The first person to occupy this prestigious office was Charles Le Myre de Vilers (1833–1918), whose arrival in Antananarivo had already generated some controversy between Protestants and Jesuits. A former LMS missionary related that the Jesuit fathers asked to join the new *résident* on his trip to the capital, but were denied the permission to do so. According to the missionary, the *résident* publicly declared that he came to the country not to give special support to the priests but “to be the friend of all and of all beliefs, and to give real help to Madagascar on the road to civilization.”⁶¹ The Jesuits refuted this claim by arguing that they arrived in Antananarivo earlier than the *résident général* and thus did not need any special support from him. Indeed, his relationship with the Jesuits was far from smooth, and when asked by the apostolic vicar why this was the case, he said he was afraid that the Protestants would complain to their fellow French Protestants, and he would be recalled from his job.⁶² He finally left Madagascar on June 28, 1889 and was replaced by Maurice Bompard (1854–1935), although he returned to the country on the eve of the second war.⁶³

The Catholic missionaries, Jesuits included, had to face some material challenges as well. Some of their residences and schools had been vandalized during their absence. Fortunately, the main Jesuit residence in Antananarivo was spared from destruction due to the care and diligence of Rainitsimbazafy, who was minister of the interior at the time. Elsewhere, in Fianarantsoa and Ambositra, the Jesuits had to deal with some Protestant faithful who used their position to intimidate them. The Jesuits were not allowed to enter their residence or church. Their keys were confiscated and they were asked to show proof of permission from the government.⁶⁴ However, despite all these difficulties, the Jesuits, alongside other missionaries, slowly and patiently resumed their work under the leadership of Cazet. Their mission can be summed up in the following words of historian Pierre Suau (1861–1916):

Foreigners, if not indifferent, to diplomatic incidents [...], deaf to Protestant clamor, the missionaries, during these nine years of truce

61 Boudou., *Les jésuites à Madagascar*, 2:303, my translation.

62 Ibid., 2:305.

63 See *ibid.*, 2:311.

64 See *ibid.*, 315.

(April 1886–October 1894), employed themselves in the apostolate of the Imerina and the Betsileo with a holy generosity. From 146, in 1880, their posts amounted, in 1893, to the figure of 443; their pupils, from 12,600 in 1886, increased in 1893 to 26,360; and on that date they had forty thousand faithful baptized and 105,419 adherents. God alone knew, and he alone will reward the efforts that these conquests had cost.⁶⁵

During this period, and though it remained difficult, the relationship between Protestant missionaries and Jesuits seems to have improved. In the school, for example, unlike before, European Protestant missionaries would only intervene with reservation. Instead, they would sow ideas of a movement that they would not lead themselves, but which would be followed by the native pastors, state officers, governors, and civil servants, and almost all the Protestants. The missionaries of both sides only met *sur le sentier de la guerre* (on the battlefield).⁶⁶ They were so different in everything: “doctrine, formation, lifestyle, nationality, the way of understanding the apostolate and Christian life, and even prejudices!”⁶⁷ Boudou describes the situation in the following words:

Those of the Protestants against the “idolatrours” papists in general, and against the “sinister Jesuit priests” in particular, judged capable of all bad blows. Those of the Catholics, too, against their adversaries, of whom they were a thousand times justified in detesting doctrines, but whose inward dispositions and circumstance generally escaped them; they judged it too logically, where abstract logic is often outside its domain, and they were too inclined to believe in the bad faith of their opponents, whereas these Anglican clergymen, independent ministers or Quakers, these Lutheran pastors wore without personal responsibility the weight of the chains forged by their Reforming fathers, and believed in fighting popery to give God a supreme homage.⁶⁸

Despite the kinds of antagonistic attitudes just described, there were occasions or incidents where Jesuits and Protestants cooperated with each other. On August 16, 1886, for instance, Jesuits and Catholic faithful buried the bodies

65 Pierre Suau, *La France à Madagascar: Histoire politique et religieuse d'une colonisation* (Paris: Librairie Académique, 1909), 185–86, quoted in Boudou, *Les jésuites à Madagascar*, 2:319, my translation.

66 Boudou, *Les jésuites à Madagascar*, 2:320.

67 Ibid.

68 Ibid., 2:320–21, my translation.

of Fr. Gaston de Batz (1836–83) and Br. Martin Brutail (d.1883), both of whom had died during the missionaries' departure. Mgr. Cazet presided over the celebration. The *résident général* and a number of Europeans were also present; so were five Protestants, among them the British vice-consul W. Clayton Pickersgill (1845–1901), the Rev. J. Wills of the LMS, and Rev. Ankers from the Norwegian Lutherans. Caussèque related the guests' admiration of the missionaries' tomb, especially its simplicity and architecture.⁶⁹ Another example of cooperation concerns that between the Jesuits and an independent pastor named Rev. James Richardson (1844–1922) in caring for the lepers at Ambahivoraka. After the departure of the Catholic missionaries, Richardson told Caussèque that he kept hearing a voice at night asking: "What will happen to these poor lepers? Who will save them?" This thought continued to haunt him. So, the following Sunday, he decided to go to the leper house. He gave money to the sick and continued to do so until the Jesuits' return, which was facilitated by the help of his friends from Britain, and he did not ask them to leave the Catholic faith. Instead, he offered to pray with them on a number of his visits if they would allow him to do so. Caussèque concluded this story saying, "Blessed is the one who inspired a Minister of the LMS, Mr. J. Richardson, with such devotion. May this act of charity attract to its author and his collaborators the grace which saves and the reward which will have no end!"⁷⁰

Fruitful though this collaboration might have been, Jesuit work in Madagascar and that of other missionaries would again come to an end with the onset of the second Franco-Hova conflict, which later evolved into a full-fledged war. However, before the war broke out, the missionaries' work was affected by a series of developments, the first of which was the Zanzibar agreement between France and Britain on August 5, 1890, according to which Madagascar became a French protectorate and France recognized Zanzibar as a British protectorate.⁷¹ The agreement ensured religious tolerance, freedom of cult and of teaching to both Protestant and Catholic missionaries from the two countries. The second development was the death of Victoire Rasoamanarivo, who had been a pillar of the Catholic Church in Madagascar and had exerted influence over the prime minister, on August 21, 1894. Her funeral took place at the Cathedral in Antananarivo where Protestants and public officials like the *résident général* joined the Catholics to honor her.⁷² The national sovereignty of the Merina kingdom was in danger due to the 1890 treaty. France was unable to obtain

69 See *ibid.*, 2:321.

70 *Ibid.*, 2:322, my translation.

71 *Ibid.*, 2:375.

72 *Ibid.*, 2:387.

the Malagasy government's consent to implement the treaty and decided to impose the protectorate by force. The *résident général* urged all French residents, including the missionaries, to leave the country. Mgr. Cazet, on behalf of the missionaries, initially refused to leave. They finally left for the east coast, then moved on to La Reunion and Mauritius after the failure of the negotiations between the prime minister and the *résident général*. The war broke out in December 1894 in Tamatave (east coast) and Majunga (west coast). French soldiers conquered Antananarivo on September 30, 1895, and a peace treaty was signed on October 1.⁷³

The missionaries were already back in Antananarivo by the end of 1895. During their absence, like in the aftermath of the first war, a number of their residences and works had been looted and destroyed. At this point, Madagascar became a French colony, and an insurrection began, conducted by the Menalamba rebels, in which European missionaries, Catholics and Protestants, were the victims.⁷⁴ Menalamba was a nationalist movement that fought against the foreign invasion and wanted to restore the monarchical regime. In the west of Antananarivo, a Quaker pastor, William Johnson (1842–1895), with his wife and daughter, were killed by the rebels. A Jesuit priest, Joseph de Villèle (1851–1939), was saved by his students.⁷⁵ Both Protestants and Catholics seemed to have arrived at the same interpretation of the ongoing insurrection. A Protestant pastor interpreted the movement as a purely pagan reaction against those occupying the country, whose victory had turned the system of the ancestral idols upside down; in his view, it was a reaction against all that was European, particularly against all that looked Christian. For Jesuit historian Fr. Victorin Malzac (1840–1913), “the first aim of the rebellion was to exterminate the white, first the French citizen who became their masters, then other foreigners who, in preaching their religion, contributed to this enslavement, and the second aim was to revive the practice of idolatry of the past.”⁷⁶

The relationship between Protestants and Catholics during the insurrection and colonization period was more complex than had previously been the case. After the signing of the peace agreement, British missionaries went to see General Jacques Duchesne (1837–1918) who led the war and the conquest of Antananarivo, and assured him of their “loyal collaboration in the work of pacification and civilization that France was to undertake.”⁷⁷ However, despite this

73 Ibid., 2:399–400.

74 See *ibid.*, 2:438.

75 Ibid., 2:416.

76 Ibid., 2:417–18.

77 Ibid., 2:423.

promise, a good number of Protestant missionaries who could not cope with the new situation decided to leave the country. The departure of the *résident général* Hippolyte Laroche (1848–1914), who was a Protestant, also affected the Protestant missionaries. They even accused the Jesuits of instigating his departure.⁷⁸ Laroche's successor, General Joseph Gallieni (1849–1916), was known as *pacificateur et organisateur* (pacifier and organizer). The first decision he made as soon as he came to office concerned the abolishment of the Hova hegemony. He executed a number of members of the royal family and sent others into exile. On February 27, 1897, he announced the end of the Merina kingdom by sending Queen Ranaivalona III into exile.⁷⁹ All of this was opposed by the Protestants. They accused Mgr. Cazet of being the main instigator of these actions and, in connection with this, they recalled his attempt to convert the queen to Catholicism before she was exiled.⁸⁰ The British–Protestant and French–Catholic split, exemplified in the phrase *qui dit Français dit Catholique, qui dit Protestant dit Anglais* (who says Catholic means French, who says Protestant means English), and whose spread the Jesuits were accused of, became even more pronounced. But the Jesuits categorically denied being the origin of such a formula. The French victory seemed to be the end of the British–Protestant hegemony, although the French government always insisted on its neutrality on the matter of confession in Madagascar during this period. Protestant missionaries, native pastors, and Malagasy faithful began to do everything possible to prevent Catholic supremacy. In school, for example, law 296, which forbade students from moving from one school to another, continued to be enforced by some Protestant leaders.⁸¹ The same law would be abolished by the *résident général* on April 17, 1896. The same year saw the arrival of the Société des Missions Évangéliques de Paris that took over the works left behind by British Protestants. It first sent two delegates—Pastor Henri Lauga and Professor Frédéric-Hermann Kruger (1851–1900)—to investigate the situation of the Protestants in Madagascar. Their report, entitled “La liberté religieuse à Madagascar,” published by the *Journal des missions évangéliques*, denounced the persecution of Protestants by the Jesuits. The latter were accused of systematic harassment, abuse of power, intimidation, threats, and violence, and

78 Ibid., 2:454.

79 Ibid., 2:456.

80 Ibid., 2:457.

81 It is to be noted that, in this period, the different Protestant denominations already owned quite a substantial infrastructure and personnel; the LMS, for example, had forty missionaries, 1,400 churches, 1,290 schools, three colleges for the formation of pastors and indigenous teachers, two colleges, and two hospitals. See Boudou, *Les jésuites à Madagascar*, 2:429.

of using all means to protect the interests and honor of France. These means included arbitrary incarceration and taking over churches that belonged to the Protestants.⁸² According to the report, the Jesuits were helped by state officers in stealing Protestant temples. In addition, an interview with Lauga on his arrival in France on December 13, 1896 portrayed his negative view of the Jesuits. When asked about his opinion on the work of Catholic missionaries, he said:

Certainly, far from me is the thought of making the trial of a religion that is not mine, but let me tell you how disgusted I was when I saw the Jesuit fathers—who form the unanimity of the Catholic missionaries in Madagascar—continue, under the guise of propagating their faith, the grabbing of the Malagasy soil.⁸³

The Jesuits' defense against this accusation was based on what they called "right and fact":⁸⁴ the temples were constructed by the villagers under the government's direction; by right, they belonged neither to the government nor to the missionaries, but to the people who built them. If a group of Protestants or a majority of them declared themselves to be Catholics, nobody could deny them the right to convert their temple in the same way. In fact, in the years 1896 and 1897, the military authority allowed five or six temples in Antananarivo to be converted into Catholic churches at the request of the inhabitants who wanted to move to the Catholic faith. The conversion of temples into Catholic churches also occurred in places outside Antananarivo. However, on March 26, 1897, General Gallieni ordered the Jesuits to return the so-called grabbed lands to their owners.⁸⁵

Conclusion

The nineteenth-century encounter between Jesuits and Protestants in Madagascar was shaped by the politics of the monarchical regime, especially its relationship with Europe and with Christianity. Although Protestants had the upper hand early on in the century and had already planted the seeds of Christianity in Madagascar, the return of religious freedom in 1861 after twenty-five years of persecution did not work in their favor. On the contrary, Jesuits quickly

82 Ibid., 2:471–73.

83 Ibid., 2:483, my translation.

84 Ibid., 2:478.

85 See *ibid.*, 2:480–81.

took advantage of the young king Radama II's openness to European civilization and his inclination to Catholicism. But that advantage did not last long. The decision of the king's successors to embrace Protestantism, symbolized by the baptisms of Queen Ranaivalona II and Prime Minister Rainilaiarivony in 1869, would affect the progress of the Catholic faith within the Merina kingdom and beyond. However, French colonization of the island in 1896 reversed the fortunes once again, as Catholics profited from Madagascar becoming a French colony. The accounts from this period clearly reveal that both Jesuits and Protestants knew how to take advantage of favorable political situations in nineteenth-century Madagascar.

The status of Christianity in central Madagascar continues to reflect some of the nineteenth-century realities mentioned in this chapter. The association of some churches or parishes that are around the queen's palace with a particular caste, for example, dates back to the pre-colonial and colonial periods. On the national level, political leaders take great care to maintain a balance between Catholics and Protestants in the composition of the government. Similar efforts to include coastal and central areas in government also reflect the need to manage tensions dating back to the missionary period of the nineteenth century.

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