

**A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE WORK
OF THE LONDON MISSIONARY SOCIETY
IN SOUTH AFRICA AND MADAGASCAR 1800 - 1900**

by

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Introduction

Max Weber defined power as a situation in which "one actor (or a number of actors) within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his (hers or their) own will despite resistance"¹. This definition helps us to understand that power refers to the ability to exercise authority to control, dominate, have ascendancy or influence over a person, a group of persons, an area, region, territory or State. In the case of a State, the exercise of authority included the collection of taxes, declaration of war regulation of immigration and trade. Authority was exercised through persuasion or use of force, using the police or

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1. Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organisation* (New York, 1964) 154.

the military, or by exercising some form of pressure or intimidation which in some cases included the use of witchcraft.

Apart from those who exercised authority, there were those who exerted some influence on those in power. At times this influence was welcomed and cultivated when there were advantages to be realized. At other time, this influence was ignored or dismissed when it was judged to be negative or disadvantageous. Among organisations which were able to influence those in authority were missionary societies serving in various parts of the world. The fact that their influence was accepted by those in authority made them powerful in their own right. In some countries, missionaries assumed an advisory role which was regularised allowing them unlimited access to those in power. And in other areas where political authority was weak or non-existent, missionaries filled the vacuum and exercised political power themselves and used it to influence social and cultural changes.

Among missionaries who exercised a considerable amount of influence among those in power in South Africa and Madagascar were those belonging to the London Missionary Society (LMS). Among most prominent missionaries who served in South Africa were Johannes Van der Kemp, John Phillips, Robert and John Moffat and David Livingstone ; and those in Madagascar were David Jones, James Cameron, W. Ellis, Joseph Pearce and James Sibree². Apart from preaching the gospel, these missionaries used their influence on the administration and chiefs in South Africa and on the Court and its officials in Madagascar to initiate social change through conversion, education - academic and technical, and the promotion of western values. These developments have been carefully documented by a number of missionaries and a few scholars³. The weakness of these studies is that their main intent was to publicise their work to seek the approval and support of the British public. In a number of cases, indigenous Christians are mentioned merely to highlight the level of "success" in their ventures to christianize non-christian societies. Their chief value is that they sketch a number of significant events concerning missionaries and the people among whom they served. They also recorded ethnographic data which has remained useful to scholars and other interested persons.

To date, there has been no attempt by scholars to compare and contrast the work of the LMS in various regions they served. The choice of this author to compare and contrast the work of the society in too adjacent but separate regions

2. Edwin W. Smith, *Robert Moffat, One of God's Gardeners* (London, 1928) ; Geoffrey Moorhouse, *The Missionaries* (London, 1973) ; Thomas F. Matthew, *Thirty Years in Madagascar* (London, 1904).

3. Richard Lovett, *The History of the London Missionary Society, 1795 - 1895* (London, 1899) 2 volumes ; Norman Goodall, *A History of the London Missionary Society* (Oxford, 1954).

provides us with the first attempt. Besides fitting in the theme of the conference it is hoped that the paper will draw parallels and differences which will stimulate further research in comparative studies of the work of this and other societies or indeed of their performance vis-à-vis other missionaries.

Foundation

The London Missionary Society was founded in September 1795 by Congregationalists in response to the formation of missionary societies in Britain and Holland. Among the influential leaders of London Missionary Society were William Wilberforce, son of a rich merchant in Hull and Thomas Farrel Buxton a partner in a brewery concern, who, wittingly or unwittingly, provided a congenial link between religion and capital⁴. The London Missionary Society, guided by its "Fundamental Principle" not to export Presbyterianism, Independency, Episcopacy or any form of church government elected to work in Tahiti, China, India, South Africa and Madagascar⁵. In 1799, a team of missionaries was led by "an eccentric" Dutchman named Johannes Van der Kemp⁶. Arrived in South Africa, he founded a number of mission stations in the Cape and later spread into the hinterland among the Namaqua, at Kuruman among the Tswana and later at Inyati near Bulawayo in present day Zimbabwe. By 1840 the London Missionary Society had 31 mission stations in South Africa being the second to Wesleyans who had 44⁷.

At the time of the arrival of the London Missionary Society, the indigenous people included the San (Bushmen), KhoiKhoi (Hottentots) who had been in contact with the Dutch for 150 years; the Bantu groups who included Xhosa, and

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4. See for example Phares M. Mutibwa, *The Malagasy and the Europeans: Madagascar's foreign Relations 1861 - 1895* (London, 1974); Bonar A. Gow, *Madagascar and the Protestant Impact* (New York, 1979).
 5. Raymond W. Arnold, "The Evolution of Congregational policy in Madagascar with special reference to the period 1862 - 1962", paper presented at a seminar on "Theory and Practice in Church Life and Growth", Nairobi, Kenya, June 1966, 1; Gow, *Madagascar*, 11.
 6. Both Elisabeth Elbourne and Edwin W. Smith refer to Van der Kemp as being "eccentric". He was Dutch, a former Captain in the Dragon Guards of Holland and a doctor of Medicine from Edinburgh University in Scotland. He spoke thirteen languages and published numerous books on Philosophy and Theology. He became a missionary in his fifties, and decided to work in South Africa. Several biographies have been published on him. For a representative sample, see Ido H.W.M. Freund, "The careers of Johannes Theoderus Van der Kemp and his role in the History of South Africa", *Tidjischrift voor Geschiedenis*, 84 (1984) 376 - 90; also "The Cape under the transition Government, 1795 - 1914" in Richard Elphek and Herman Gilonee (eds), *The Shaping of the South African Society, 1652 - 1840* (Middletown, 1988) 339 - 43; J. du Plessis, *Christian Missions in South Africa* (London, 1911) 99 - 110; Edwin W. Smith, *The Blessed Missionaries* (Oxford, 1950) 44 - 6; Enklaar, "Life and Work of Dr. J. van der Kemp, 1747 - 1811"; also *Missionary Pioneers and protagonist of racial equality in South Africa* (Cape Town, 1988); also see the review by Elisabeth Elbourne, "Concerning Missionaries: The Case of Van der Kemp", *Journal of South African Studies*, Vol. 17, number 1 (March 1991) 153 - 164.
 7. John Phillips, *Researches in South Africa*, Volume 2 (London, 1928), 227; Thomas Farrel Buxton, *Memoirs of Thomas Farrel Buxton* (London, 1866); Cecil Northcott, *Robert Moffat; Pioneer in Africa, 1817 - 1870* (London, 1961), 28; John Centlivres Chase, *The Cape of Good and Eastern Province of Algoa Bay* (Cape Town, 1967) 139.

Pondo, in Eastern Cape, the Pedi, Sotho and Tswana and Zulu in South Africa. After Mfecane of 1820s, came the Ndebele in what is Zimbabwe today⁸.

By 1799, South Africa had already gone through a number of social transformations. Dutch Settlers had established a settlement around the Cape in 1653 to supply ships sailing to and from India. In 1795, the Cape was annexed by the British as a spoil of the Napoleonic war. In 1803, it was returned to the Dutch but was re-occupied again in 1806⁹. By the time the London Missionary Society arrived, the San and KhoiKhoi lived in what the missionary John Phillips described as "a State of hopeless bondage"¹⁰. Between 1653 and 1800, they had lost their fertile lands and large livestock herds to the Dutch who, in spite of their Calvinistic beliefs, employed trickery, open robbery and brutal force to get what they wanted. As a result, these former prosperous societies were reduced to a state of impoverishment and squalor¹¹. Reverend Thomas Farrel Buxton once observed that the KhoiKhoi had been subjected to the

*heaviest labours, to every species harassing annoyance, to every kind of revolting punishment. And beneath their grinding misery their numbers dwindled, their persons became dwarfed and their minds brutalised till even slaves looked down on them as lower and baser drudges far below the level of mankind*¹².

At the time the London Missionary Society arrived at the Cape, the KhoiKhoi and the San were a deprived lot dependent on the Dutch for subsistence. This process of impoverishment and deprivation was gradually extended to the north of the Cape by the Dutch moving out of the Cape to open a new frontier. Here they came into confrontation with Bantu groups moving South. To the east were Xhosa and Zulu groups whilst on the plateau were the Sotho Speakers¹³.

Madagascar, separated from the African littoral by the Mozambique Channel which is 250 miles across, is an island approximately 995 miles long and 360 miles wide, with an area of 228,589 square miles. In the nineteenth century, the island was inhabited by about sixteen ethnic groups. The most important were the Merina or Hovas on the Central plateau, the Sakalava on the western coast,

8. John Phillips, *A Short History of South Africa* (London, 1973), 36 - 49 ; Monica Wilson and Leonard Thompson (eds), *The Oxford History of South Africa* (London, 1969) see Volume One ; and also *South Africa to 1870* (London, 1969) 49.

9. Leonard Thompson, "The South African Dilemma" in Louis Hartz (ed), *The Founding of the New Society* (New York, 1964), 182. This period is summarised in Bernard M. Magubane, *The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa* (London, 1979) 25 - 36.

10. John Phillips, *Researches in South Africa*, Vol. 1., 136.

11. Sir John Barrow, *Travels in the Interior of South Africa*, Vol. 1. (London, 1808) 17. C.S. Home, *The Story of the London Missionary Society 1795 - 1895* (London, 1894) 58.

12. Thomas Farrel Buxton, *Memoirs of Sir Thomas Farrel Buxton*, (edited by Charles Buxton) (London 1886) 217.

13. J. Du Plessis, *A History of Christian Missions in South Africa* (Cape Town, 1965) 3 - 6.

the Betsimisaraka on the east coast ; the Betsileo south of the Merina, the Tsimihety to the north, the Antandroy, Mahafaly and Antanosy to the south¹⁴. Despite the distinct racial and even physical differences between the ethnic groups, one striking feature was that all spoke a common language and with few exceptions, had similar traditions and customs¹⁵. From this cluster of ethnic groups, the Merina under King Radama I (1810 - 1828) and Queen Ranavalona I (1828 - 1861) sought to extend Merina supremacy throughout Madagascar. By developing and strengthening their social and political institutions, these two rulers came to be seen, regarded, treated and accepted as *de facto* as well as *de jure* rulers of the whole island¹⁶.

King Radama I was responsible for inviting the London Missionary Society and other missionaries. Although he himself was not keen on Christianity as a religion, he was quick to stress the positive aspects of western civilization¹⁷. Missionaries were given complete freedom to proselytize the Malagasy with the London Missionary Society being the big favourite over French missionaries. His efforts were complemented by those of Queen Ranavalona II (1868 - 1883)¹⁸.

In 1869 she was baptised as a Christian and ordered the burning of state idols - declaring Christianity as a State religion. The number of Christian converts increased from 7,066 church members and 37,112 adherents in 1868 to 20,951 church members and 231,756 adherents in 1870 rising to an all time high of 61,723 communicants and 230,418 adherents in 1887. Working with them were 828 Indigenous "ordained" Ministers and 4,395 preachers¹⁹. From the 1870s, up to 1900, there was no turning back in the ascendancy of Protestantism and the popularity of the London Missionary Society²⁰.

The missionaries in Madagascar worked hard to win and retain influence with the Malagasy ruling Class. When, arising from a misunderstanding between the Malagasy and the French, the latter invaded Madagascar and defeated the Malagasy, no protests were heard from the British Missionaries including the London Missionary Society. In fact, many looked to the passing away of the Malagasy regime which they saw as an obstruction to their work²¹.

14. Gow, *Madagascar*, 1 - 3 ; Mutibwa, *The Malagasy*, 7 - 8 ; Hubert Deschamps, *Histoire de Madagascar* (Paris, 1960) 119 - 27. On the discussion the society see Kari Mason, *Customs and Habits of the Merina Tribe of Madagascar* (London, 1950) 178 - 9 ; Nigel Heseltine, *Madagascar* (London, 1838) 69 - 73.

15. Mutibwa, *The Malagasy*, 1 - 20 ; Bow, *Madagascar*.

16. Mutibwa, *The Malagasy*, 45-75 ; W. Ellis, *Madagascar Revisited : Describing the events of a new reign and the Revolution which followed* (London, 1867).

17. Mutibwa, *The Malagasy*, 21 - 23.

18. Mutibwa, *The Malagasy*, 159 - 188.

19. J. Sibree, *The Great African Island - Chapters on Madagascar* (London, 1880) 365.

20. Mutibwa, *The Malagasy*, 159 - 188 ; W.J. Townsend, *Madagascar, its missionaries and martyrs* (London, 1880) 66 - 7 ; W.M. Eiselen, "Christianity and the Religious life of the Bantu", 68.

21. Mutibwa, *The Malagasy*, 189 - 217.

Although Christianity had such an immediate impact on the Malagasy, it was not accepted without resistance and in some cases hostility as well. In Madagascar for example, during the reign of Queen Ranavalona I (1828 - 1861), the London Missionary Society and other missionaries were expelled from the island. Queen Ranavalona I disliked foreign influence because of what was seen as the negative effect it was having on national institutions, traditions and customs. The expulsion of the missionaries was seen as a way to disengage from and rid off the influence of the London Missionary Society in political and religious matters. The Indigenous Christians were persecuted and forced into hiding. However, the inroads that Christianity made in the Malagasy societies between 1820 and 1828 remained steadfast. In spite of persecution and death for some adherents, the Christian communities continued to survive and hold clandestine meetings. Ranavalona's reign was seen by Christians in other parts of the world and by nationalists as a time when the Malagasy rose to the occasion to eradicate foreign influences which were seen as detrimental to Malagasy traditional and society²².

Following the death of Ranavalona and the accession of Radama II, missionaries were allowed back. The London Missionary Society led by Rev. W. Ellis arrived in 1862. The zeal and determination with which the missionaries worked, yielded the desired results. In 1863, there were about 5,000 Christians in Antananarivo out of a total of 60,000. Five years later, the London Missionary Society alone, had 10,546 church members and 153,000 adherents throughout Madagascar. Among these included the Prime Minister and husband of the Queen - both baptised in February 1869, and a large number of leading officials in government²³.

The fact that Malagasy leaders embraced Protestantism associated with the English rather than Catholicism associated with the French, was important for the future of Madagascar in many ways. Protestantism was regarded as the religion of the rulers and those associated with power. Their opponents became Catholics. The French saw the acceptance of Protestantism as an indication by the ruling class of their commitment to the British cause and a rejection of French culture and influence²⁴.

And in parts of Africa, Christianity as introduced by the London Missionary Society was shunned by most chiefs and ordinary people²⁵. Responding to a question whether Africans were "hungering from the gospel", Reverend John May responded.

No, we see no outward sign of a longing for the gospel here except on the part of a very few who have been under Christian influence for years past in our mission.

22. Mutibwa "Madagascar 1806 - 80", 423 , 30.

23. Bow, *Madagascar*, 14 - 31, Mutibwa, *The Malagasy*, 76 - 99 ; Ellis, *Madagascar Revisited*.

24. Gow, *Madagascar*, 39 - 50, 78 - 112.

25. Lovett, *History*, Vol. 1. 757 ; Gow, *Madagascar*, 85 - 113.

*There is a distinct hunger for calico and beads, (gun) powder and shot... and all that constitutes wealth (for the African)*²⁶.

Only the Tswana around Kuruman mission station showed, as an ethnic group, keener interest in Christianity - partly for reasons of commerce and to seek protection from attacks by more powerful groups. Even among this group as well as many others, a large percentage of them remained ambivalent and non committal, changing sides from the traditional religions to Christianity and vice versa, when it suited them. Whereas in Madagascar the court played a major role in promoting the spread of Christianity, this was not the case in much of South Africa²⁷.

Part of the problem in the work of the missionaries was in the fact that many were unable to communicate effectively in Malagasy or the various African languages. Examples abound both South Africa and Madagascar where missionaries could not speak the local languages well to make themselves understood²⁸. Faced with that problem many missionaries found that many people among whom they worked did not respond. Invariably they blamed their congregations rather than themselves. Some referred to the Malagasy and Africans as being "dull", "childish" or accused them of having little or no capacity for the Christian religion²⁹. Sometimes the reason for the aloofness by the Malagasy and the Africans was due to the inconsistencies in which the doctrine was presented³⁰. Among these was the punishment after death for sins committed when a person was alive. Another was the concept of Hell with all the fires burning. The significance of this being a form of punishment was not grasped at all. To the Africans and Malagasy, a huge fire was for some age groups, good for warming themselves and providing light. Another was the colour of God and his angels. Why was it white like that of the missionaries, or black like the Africans ? To them anything white was regarded as a ghost. Or was it brown like that of the Malagasy ? And why was Satan always black and

26. Ngwabi Bhebe, *Christianity and Traditional Religion in Western Zimbabwe 1859 - 1923* (London, 1979)
27. John May, "Are the Heathens hungering for the Gospel ?" *Central Africa Chronicle of the London Missionary Society* (December 1900) 300 - 1.

27. Gow, *Madagascar*, 84 - 5 ; Lovett, *History*, Vol. 1, 757.

28. W.M. Eiselen, *Western Civilization and the Natives of South Africa : Studies in Cultural Contact* (New York, 1934) 66.

29. Gow, *Madagascar* ; Mutibwa, *Malagasy*.

30. Gow, *Madagascar*, 84.

never white ? Another was the trinity. God the father being three things at the same time. Was he a magician³¹ ?

Indigenous Religions

Before the arrival of missionaries, both the Africans in Southern Africa and the Malagasy had their own kind of religion. Although they could not define their religion, it was a set of beliefs that permeated their lives and dictated their conduct. Religion was articulated through their conception, ideas and images of the world and the local environment in which they lived. Religious practices were seen and conducted at several levels : ancestral cults or spirits which were attributed with power of controlling their lives, including that of bringing diseases and even death as a form of punishment. For this reason, there was a lot of reverence for the ancestors to whom regular sacrifices were given in form of food beer, beads and pots. There were also territorial cults to which reverence, respect and sacrifice were given. Both the Malagasy and Africans knew of the existence of the High God as a Supreme being. They also believed in the existence of other spirits/gods who governed their activities in various areas such as agriculture, hunting, fishing, mining and smelting, marriages, sickness and in undertaking long journeys. The polytheistic approach to their religious beliefs and practices were in no way regularised in the manner in which Christianity and other religions are today. Both the Malagasy and the Africans had neither regular churches, temples or clergy. They did have one or two priests or priestess for the powerful oracles or spirits who acted as mouth pieces. In other situations, there were people possessed from time to time who interpreted the messages as given which could be in form of advice or warning. Because the indigenous religion did not have outward manifestation, European settlers and even missionaries believed rather erroneously that the Malagasy and the Africans had no religion. The fact that they introduced Christianity indicated that there would be a clash of ideas, discarding of the old and adopting of the new or as it happened in many cases, the syncretic fusion of the old and new to develop a new hybrid³².

31. This information derived from various researches in Zambia. This problem was highlighted by a number of scholars. Gow for example states that :

No British Protestant missionary ever said that either Jesus Christ, Mary or God was a European, but then neither did any missionary say that he taught that there were any colour other than white. Their whole role religious programme projected a white God and a white hierarchy of the spiritually elect. All mission pictures showed white angels and a white Jesus Christ.

In Antananarivo, the Statue of the Virgin Mary created some problem in that the Statue was copper-coloured. This was later repainted white to satisfy disappointed Malagasy.

James Sibree, *Fifty Years in Madagascar* (London, 1880) 245 - 6, 57 - 92 ; C.F.A. Moss, *A Pioneer in Madagascar Joseph Pearce of the London Missionary Society* (London, 1913) 23.

32. Bhebe, *Christianity* 1 - 23, Eiselen, "Christianity", 67 - 94.

Although Christianity was a foreign religion, which was also antagonistic to indigenous religions, it was accepted by a good number of the Malagasy and initially tolerated and eventually accepted by the African groups in South Africa, for a good number of reasons. The first was clearly to use missionaries who established mission stations and sub stations in the various parts of the two countries - some in very remote areas, as agents in accessing trade goods such as clothes, blankets and utensils ; to have access to technology such as the mending and repairing of firearms which both the Africans and Malagasy were buying in large quantities ; and to acquire European education and technical training. The second, was for some rulers such as Radama I and Ranaivalona II among the Malagasy and the Tswana chiefs in South Africa, to pursue pro-European policies in order to secure favourable terms of trade or protection. The third was for the new elite who acquired European education such as teachers, evangelists, western trained doctors and administrators, was to acquire new status. These were the people who were collectively responsible for the spread of Christianity and Western ideals. And fourth, in a number of societies such as the KhoiKhoi and the San, the missionaries came to be associated with the protection of their rights. In many societies, in South Africa and among a cross section of Malagasy ethnic groups, Christianity came to be associated with social and economic advancement (referred to as civilization) and a protective measure against attacks and invasion. Whereas conversion was rapid in some Malagasy societies - especially those close to the capital, it was very very slow and gradual in most parts of South Africa. In some societies, such as among the Ndebele led by Mzilikazi, Christianity was completely ignored because it openly conflicted with traditional and cultural norms. In both Madagascar and South Africa, where Christianity was embraced, its adoption resulted in some form of acculturalisation requiring the discarding some of the traditional practices.

Conversion

In his contribution to a book edited by Professor I Schapera entitled *Western Civilization and the Natives of South Africa : studies in Cultural Contact*, W.M. Eiselen in a paper on "Christianity and the religious life of the Bantu" wrote the following :

What we actually want to know is how Christianity through missionaries and European Christians, has changed Bantu life, whether the Bantu Christian has embraced the teaching of Christ and our Christian ways wholeheartedly as an unqualified blessing for his people and whether his heathen brother adheres just as firmly to religious doctrines and rites as his ancestors. No statistics can help us to answer these searching questions³³.

33. Eiselen, "Christianity", 67 - 94.

This candid view hinges on the acceptability of Christianity by the South African indigenous groups and indeed the Malagasy peoples as well.

The European missionaries including the London Missionary Society regarded themselves as "civilisers" of the pagan societies among whom they worked. In both South Africa and Madagascar missionaries without anthropological training came to equate the acceptance of Christianity with "civilisation" with such an attitude, they held negative disposition towards indigenous customs and institutions. Religious practices were condemned. Figurines (not idols) sacred and important to the religious, social and economic well being of the African and Malagasy Societies were confiscated and to the disbelief of the local people either openly broken up or burnt.

In South Africa and Madagascar like in other parts of non-Western world, missionaries condemned polygamy widely practised by the indigenous people. Missionaries were disgusted with the idea that a man could have more than one wife. Polygamous marriages were regarded as immoral as they represented more or less the characteristics of a harem. The opposition to polygamy raised a lot of strife between missionaries and the local people who did not see anything wrong with an institution which they had practised for centuries. Polygamous marriages gave status to the man, created a pool of readily available labour and the large numbers strengthened the family or the clan vis-à-vis others. And in situations where sometimes men were few as many died in wars and hunting expeditions, polygamy gave a chance for women to be married, to have a family and also to have security. Men or women in polygamous marriages who wanted to become Christians were asked to divorce and remain with only one wife or to leave a polygamous marriage. Malagasy and the Africans all opposed this demand. They argued that polygamy should be preserved as a traditional institution. Similarly they also opposed the ban on divorces. The views of the missionaries on marriages are best outlined by Reverend Thomas Matthews who wrote : the following on the Malagasy which is also pertinent to the Africans :

To try and teach this people that marriage is a sacred sacrament entailing most solemn obligation and serious responsibility and that the proverb of their forefathers that "Marriage is not a knot but a bow" is a filthy old falsehood that ought to be flung from their memories forever. This subject of marriage is giving a great amount of trouble in all the country at present, and is likely to do for some years yet³⁴.

The problem was largely because the European missionaries were applying their traditional values to the Malagasy society. Even when the literate Malagasy argued that they did not see anything wrong with polygamy which in any case

34. London Missionary Society, (LMS) Annual report of the Reverend Thomas T. Matthews, 1876.

was sanctioned by the Old Testament, the missionaries still did not accept the efficacy of polygamous marriages³⁵.

Missionaries also condemned a whole host of traditions and customs. Among these were annual circumcision ceremonies which were abolished because it was a "heathen" practice and interrupted church activities and attendance of schools. The fact that it marked an importance rites of passage in the development of boys was disregarded. Divination was also condemned and missionaries worked hard to have the converts surrender their amulets, fetishes and charms. Those found practising divination were suspended. Drinking of alcohol was discouraged. Brewing of beer was regarded as a waste of valuable corn and converts were implored to stay clear of alcohol. Those found indulging in drinking were suspended³⁶.

All these attacks disturbed and disorganised what was, prior to the arrival of the missionaries, an orderly way of life. Society was divided between adherents to the new faith and those who remained faithful to the old ways. According to Efrain Anderson.

*Such a rapture seemed normal to the missionary who more or less consciously identified christianity with western civilization and sought to christianize and westernize at the same time.*³⁷

The acceptance of Christianity in both South Africa and Madagascar was a big psychological, sociological and philosophical step. Conversion meant a departure from the cultural life as known by the society ; it meant leaving the religion of his ancestors for the religion of the white men, who not only were foreigners to both the country and the indigenous cultures but were also bent on destroying them. Some local people accepted Christianity for a variety of reasons. For many even if conversion was real and made constant and conscious efforts to break with the past, they could not wholly uproot themselves because they could *not or never* isolate themselves *entirely* from their cultural environment. This dichotomy of being " a child of two worlds" persisted in many christians and created schisms in the Malagasy and South African societies. In Madagascar, the court was both in the forefront of encouraging christianization and in opposing it. In South Africa among some ethnic groups, there was a

35. Gow, *Madagascar*, 83 - 89 ; M.C. Musambachime, "African reactions to Christian conversion. The Lunda of Mwata Kazembe and the Mbereshi mission (LMS), 1900-1930", in *Histoire sociale de l'Afrique de l'Est (XIXe-XXe siècle)*, Paris, Karthala, 1991, 415-435.

36. Musambachime, "African reaction".

37. Efrain Anderson, "The Christian Life at the heart of the African" In *Anonymous Abundant Life in Changing Africa : Report of the West Central Africa Regional Conference held at Leopoldville, Congo-Belge*, July 13 - 24, 1946, 45 - 6.

conscious decision wittingly or unwittingly, forced or not, to assimilate from the new comer but never to allow themselves to be assimilated completely³⁸.

Naturally, the zealotry with which the missionaries attacked indigenous institutions created some form of resistance. One of these was in form of spirit possessions in which entranced persons acted as media canvassing for the retention of the old ways of the ancestors. In Madagascar, for example, it became an organised form of resistance to Christianity. And in some areas, the local people did not show any interest in Christianity. Others objected to its doctrines and pronouncements and the double standards of the missionaries, who, in South Africa and Madagascar considered themselves as being superior to the indigenous people. This was, in spite of the preaching that all men are equal in the sight of the Lord³⁹.

Missionaries who antagonised local people were subjected to various forms of reactions, some were boycotted completely leading to a collapse of their enterprise. Others had their houses and churches burnt. Some were subjected to repeated robberies. Attempts were also made to frighten some of them by employing witchcraft. In fact some areas were declared as being unsafe as burglary and arson increased⁴⁰.

Schools and Literacy

In South Africa and Madagascar, missionaries opened a network of schools in the neighbourhood surrounding Central Mission Stations established in various parts of the two countries. Parents were pressed to send children to school. Some of the bright pupils were co-opted and trained as teachers and evangelists who were responsible for establishing out-station schools and the spread of Christianity into less more accessible areas⁴¹.

In both South Africa and Madagascar, the missionaries paid particular attention to printing and publication. First, they reduced Malagasy and Bantu languages to written forms using the Latin alphabet. In this venture the missionaries relied on the significant contribution, assistance and cooperation of the able Khoikhoi, San bantu and Malagasy converts. Translations of the gospel, catechism classics and reading primers were their first publications. The dissemination of printed material, and the provision of education assisted not

38. Gow, *Madagascar*. The LMS did admit that "Many old customs... which, to the native mind, are quite right are proper, are seen by us to be productive of immorality and other evils..." LMS, *Ten Years review of Mission Work in Madagascar 1880 - 1890* (Antananarivo, 1890) 60.

39. Musambachime, "African reactions"; Gow, *Madagascar*, 94 - 102.

40. Deschamps, *Histoire de Madagascar*, 218; *My Gazety Malagasy*, 1 June, 1876.

41. Charles F.A. Moss. *A Pioneer in Madagascar: Joseph Pearce* (London, Headly Brothers, 1913) 82.

only in the christianization process but also in promoting literacy and evolution of indigenous languages and literature⁴².

In Madagascar, by 1827, more than 4,000 Malagasy were able to read and write in their own language. And in 1829, the London Missionary Society could boast of 23 schools and 2,300 pupils. By 1887 there were over 97,891 pupils in 1,043 schools⁴³.

Compulsory attendance was enforced. Brighter pupils were sent abroad for further training. But with educational expansion dominated by missionary influence, it is not surprising that technical education lagged behind. The level of academic achievement was so high that by 1880, Madagascar produced its first indigenous born doctors who qualified at Edinburgh University⁴⁴.

Schools became the chief instrument of ideological transformation and acculturation of the Africans and Malagasy in Western culture, philosophy, value judgement and modes of thought. Daniel Kunene, describes the situation in which the Malagasy and African students found themselves. He wrote :

When we bear in mind that many African [and Malagasy] customs were declared by missionaries to be incompatible with christian faith, and that the missionary would under no circumstances relax the rigid rules, then we can clearly see the beginning, in this respect of the christianized African, of the process of de cultururation. The African intellectual who came out of the missionary school was not only literate, but also he was a changed being. He looked about himself and saw nothing but evil. He saw his "heathen" brothers singing and dancing and drinking and loving in pursuit as they thought of Good Life, and he shook his head in pity. For suddenly these things had become ugly and sinful. No wonder for, in his school days, this Black intellectual was subjected to teaching materials chosen and prepared with an eye to making them effective instruments for continuous absorption of the christian religion. Not only that but in reading lessons, for example, while the ways of life of the peoples of western countries were praised in glowing terms, and suitable tribute paid to their national heroes, selections from the oral traditions of the Africans were mostly ones which painted the past black, and the moral always strongly implied or even overtly

42. Monica Wilson, "The Growth of Peasant Communities" in M. Wilson and Leonard Thompson (eds), *Oxford History of South Africa*, 72 - 44. One LMS missionary, John May, emphasized that :

"it is most important that the converts should learn to read in order that they may obtain fuller knowledge of the scriptures, but it is even more important that they should learn to live self-respecting progressive christian lives".

Chronicles of the London Missionary Society, 2, 3 (1904), 89.

43. Gow, *Madagascar*, 149. Footnotes 89, 91.

44. The first were Rajaonah Rainandriamampandry. Graduates in 1880. He was both a Preacher and Medical Doctor. Another Andrianaly. Graduated in 1880. Gow, *Madagascar*, 142 - 3, 149. Footnotes 89.

stated, that they must be grateful for the coming of the White Man who led them out of their ... sinful past. The process of direction had begun, complex and divisive - christian and non-christian drifted apart : worse than that they began to hate each other⁴⁵.

In short, the educated became "children of two worlds". Often these two came in conflict, one counterbalancing the other. They could not reject either.

In the provision of education, the London Missionary Society in Madagascar were well ahead of their counterparts in South Africa. In 1876, they graduated 6,888 passes in standards Five and Six inclusive. A year later, the number rose to 10,016 - an increase of 45 per cent⁴⁶. Many of these graduates were taken into government service and others came to serve at the Palace in various capacities⁴⁷.

The level of education being offered created a large pool of literature persons. Many went beyond the reading of the Bibles and other scriptural tracts. A good number published their thoughts and opinions in a monthly magazine "*Teny Soa*" (good words) which built up a wide readership. Some writers criticised missionaries, their authoritarianism, and racial attitudes. The educational attainment in Madagascar was not matched in Southern Africa at all.

Medicine

The provision of western medicine, like western education, was meant to assist the evangelising programme. The practical purpose and function of medicine was clearly stated as follows :

Medical, like educational work, must be carried on with a definite aim for the furtherance of the gospel... While natives must not be encouraged to become christians and to take an interest in the mission merely for the sake of medical benefits received, the medical missionary should not lose no suitable opportunity of introducing... "the word in season" that will direct the minds of the people to the Great Physician⁴⁸.

Missionaries had little or no medical training, but almost all dispensed medicines and performed minor cures in the small hospitals they opened. In a number of cases, indigenous students who excelled in their studies were picked to become orderlies and nurses. Some received professional training and others

45. Daniel Kunene, "Deculturation - the African Writer's Response", *Africa Today*, 15, N° 4 (August - September 1968).

46. LMS, *Annual Reports*, (1887) 237 ; Gow, *Madagascar*, 118 - 139.

47. Gow, *Madagascar*, 138 - 9.

48. Gow, *Madagascar*, 140.

learnt on the job. Again like in education, the London Missionary Society in Madagascar excelled in the provision of this service⁴⁹.

Commerce

The mission stations which sprang up in parts of Southern Africa and Madagascar became what one could call "Centres of European civilization and acculturation". They were also Centres responsible for the gradual or fast transformation of the indigenous societies. The missionary enterprise in both Madagascar and South Africa assisted the spread of the money economy and the support of the British textile industry. In both countries, the arrival of European settlers, traders and missionaries helped to dislocate well developed indigenous industries and subject the local people to easy an absorption into the capitalist economy. Missionaries worked extremely hard to cultivate a demand for European manufactured good - especially clothing. They applied pressure on their converts to adopt European dress and the trappings of western life which were regarded and accepted as signs of conversion, purity and a proper expression of christian life. In hiding this pressure, some missionaries want to paint a picture indicating that the adoption of European clothing was purely an indigenous initiative. One missionary, Brownlie reported the following as part of his experience in South Africa :

As natives came under the influence of the teaching of missionaries, they at once... sought to cover themselves with European clothing, and thus, in proportion to the spread of missionary influence, the desire for articles of European manufacture grew and spread, and I think... that to the missionary mainly we (the British) owe the great revenue now derived from native trade⁵⁰.

For Madagascar, Reverend James Sibree did not hide his belief in widely held belief that Christianity and commerce went together. On clothing, he was blunt in stating that it was

a subject always connected with morality... Every woman must have a neat jacket and skirt and the men their pantaloons (trousers) as well as the flowery outer dress or lamba (common to both sexes) of European calico. Wherever christianity comes, there immediately springs up demands for foreign manufactured goods, and the trader follows in the wake of the missionary... It would not be too much to say that each missionary represents a value of from £2,000 to £3,000 per annum in foreign goods⁵¹.

49. Moss, *A Pioneer in Madagascar*, 86 ; Gow, *Madagascar*, 140 - 145. For a comparison in Africa and Madagascar, see Home, *The Story* ; Lovett, *A History* ; Goodal, *A History*.

50. Quoted in Sheila T. Van der Horst, *Native Labour in South Africa* (London, Franc Cass and Company, 1971) 20.

51. James Sibree, *The Great African Island : Chapters on Madagascar* (London, 1880) 354 ; Gow, *Madagascar*, 65 - 69.

Naturally, the missionary became the agent of British merchantile trade. Missionary enterprise for some included trading as well. Sir George Younge, Governor of the Cape colony from 1799 to 1801 observed that although there were few missionaries, they were, nevertheless

pushing themselves very much... They deal largely in European goods which they supply their proselytes with good profit... Missionaries are most of them merchants and tradesmen : Blacksmiths, shoemakers, and such like for the good of the souls of their congregations... They deal in wollen goods... and they possess of great wealth and of funds that they were equal to any standing⁵².

To apply more pressure on the Africans, Missionaries demanded that African should be clothed in European clothes. Missionaries at every mission station echoed the "important" instruction "to teach the [African and Malagasy] the use of money and to clothe themselves"⁵³. And in South Africa, Missionaries were openly in the forefront to "clothe" the Africans.

One of them is reported to have told a group of African chiefs that :

You shall have traders and you must teach your people to bring gum, timber, and so on to sell, that you may learn the art of money and buy yourselves. You must learn that it is money which makes people rich⁵⁴.

With total agreement among the missionaries, the Government in South Africa was easily influenced to enforce a deliberate policy whose results were obviously going to be profitable to the British industries. In Natal, the Kaffir Commission of 1852 and 1853 recommended that :

All Kaffirs (Africans) should be ordered to go decently clothed. This measure would at once tend to increase the number of labourers because many would be obliged to work to produce the means of buying clothing. It would add to the general revenue of the colony through custom duties⁵⁵.

In Pietermaritzburg and Durban, proclamations were issued requiring Africans to wear European clothes⁵⁶. The importance of Africans in commerce was illustrated by Sir George Grey, who in his speech to Parliament in Cape Town in 1885, noted that :

Natives were to become a part of ourselves, with a common faith and common interests, useful servants, consumer of our goods, contributors to our revenue, in

52. George M. Theal (ed), *Records of the Cape Colony*, Vol 3 (Franc Cass and Company, 1971) 20.

53. H. Lawson, "The Role of Capitalism in South African History : the Destruction of the Tribal Society" *Liberation*, (September 1956), 19.

54. Lawson, "The Role of Capitalism", 21.

55. H.J. Simons, *African Women : Their Legal Status in South Africa* (Evanston, 19, Northwestern Press, 1968) 22.

56. Simons, *African Women*, 23.

short a source of strength and wealth for this colony, such as Providence designed them to be⁵⁷.

The London Missionary Society, together with other denominations welcomed these pronouncements. In fact they encouraged their congregations to appear in European clothing. One, Norman Etherington had this to say :

The clothing which the missionaries recommended for the sake of modesty was for many of their converts an introduction to a new system of production and exchange whether a convert earned his new clothes by wage labour or fabricated them with European looms and needles, he was entering new kinds of economic relationship⁵⁸.

In Madagascar, British manufactures and tools became commonly used. The proliferation of English wares such as knives, axes, and hoes among the Africans and Malagasy contributed to a rapid decline in indigenous industries. In Madagascar one missionary established a foundry to smelt local iron and produced good quality iron used in building a palace in the capital. A number of missionaries took part in trade and commerce themselves, opening shops, and each mission station stocked with imported wares. Some, like James Cameron in Madagascar, reaped substantial amounts of money by producing goods which were highly sought after such as gun powder and soap. This was without the knowledge of the directors of the London Missionary Society⁵⁹.

Missionaries also encouraged their converts to build houses which required the use of imported materials and tools. In Madagascar, owners of European-built houses who were christians were exempted from paying hut tax⁶⁰.

Slavery

The desire to promote commerce and trade led the London Missionary Society missionaries to attack the institution of slavery which was well entrenched in both Madagascar and South Africa. The slaves came from African mainland. Slavery provided the most extreme and straight forward cheap labour, which in itself was a form of exploitation. All returns and profits were accrued by the slave owner⁶¹. In Madagascar, slavery was radically different from South Africa in that slaves could, to a certain degree, exercise a form of social and financial mobility which in a number, were able to find their freedom.

57. Van der Horst, *Native Labour*, 17, 61 - 70.

58. Norman Etherington, "African Economic Experiments in Colonial Natal 1845 - 1880", *African Economic History*, (1978), 1.

59. Gow, *Madagascar*, 65 - 68.

60. Gow, *Madagascar*, 99 - 101, Mutibwa, *The Malagasy*, 224, 200 - 1 ; Horne, *The History*, 145 - 7, 160 - 1.

61. Gow, *Madagascar*, 100 - 1.

Many of the Christians were themselves slave owners. Missionaries also owned a large number of slaves who performed a variety of services including carrying them in hammocks from place to place. Attempts to introduce horses were discouraged and finally vetted by the London Missionary Society of Board of Directors. In fact, the issue quietly dropped long before 1877 when a formal emancipation of slaves was announced⁶².

In South Africa, slaves were a form of cheap labour, living under the worst conditions in the farms and in domestic service. The London Missionary Society missionaries in both Madagascar and South Africa saw the institution as dehumanising and an impediment to the commercial revolution. And since Britain was the main investor, abolition promised an increase in trade and profits. With these hopes, the missionaries in South Africa led by Thomas Farrel Buxton and John Phillips waged a successful campaign against slave trade and slavery. Thomas Farrel Buxton argued that :

Legitimate commerce would put down the slave Trade, by demonstrating the superior value of man as a labourer on the soil, to man as an object of merchandise ; and if conducted on wise and equitable principles, might be the precursor, or rather the attendant, of civilization, peace and christianity to be enlightened, of warlike, and heathen tribes who now so fearfully prey each other to supply the slave workers of the New World. In this view of the subject, the merchant, the philanthropist, the patriot and the christian may unite ; and should the Government of this country lend its powerful influence in organizing a commercial system of just liberal and comprehensive principles - guarding against the rights of the natives on the one hand, and security protection to the honest trader on the other - a blow would be struck at the nefarious traffic in human beings, from which it could not recover⁶³...

In this venture, he saw Britain as being the main beneficiary in pursuit of "private enterprise and profit". With this belief, they managed, through petitions to influence the British Government in proscribing slavery. This opened the door to the gradual absorption of the African people into the capitalist economy providing cheap migrant labour to the farms, the diamond and gold mines at Kimberley and the Rand⁶⁴.

Human Rights

Unlike in Madagascar, where the Malagasy were a free and independent nation recognised by both France and Britain for the large part of the nineteenth century, the disparate ethnic groups of South Africa were not. Those in the Cape

62. Gow, *Madagascar*, 101, see footnotes 61 - 70.

63. Buxton, *Memoirs*, 223, 462.

64. Magubane, *The Political Economy*, 55 - 118.

- the San and Khoikhoi, lived in what the missionary John Phillips described as "a state of hopeless bondage". They could not for example.

*Travel half a mile ... without a written pass, without being liable to be apprehended as vagabonds and subjected to serve severe punishment. [They] were compelled to be in service*⁶⁵.

The brutality to which the San were subjected by the Dutch Settlers was extremely harsh. Perusal of missionary correspondence of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries suggests that violence pervaded the whole frontier society. Signs of Khoisan independence were an anathema to the Dutch colonialists. And in spite of their Calvinistic beliefs, their harsh and brutal subjugation of the San and Khoikhoi reduced them to a state of virtual slavery. One Khoi named Andries Stoeffels told a British Parliamentary Enquiry in 1835 : "We were destroyed day after day till there was no deliverance". This was confirmed by the London Missionary Society missionaries. One of them, James Read reported that many San and Khoikhoi were "flogged to pieces with a sjambok or whip made of the skin of the rhinoceros ... and then a vast quantity of salt rubbed into the wounds (sometimes gunpowder and vinegar is mixed with the salt)⁶⁶. Many were killed for trivial reasons. Others were mutilated without any regard to their health.

In all this, the local authorities were fully aware of these cruelties but did not stop them. It fell on the missionaries - with those of the London Missionary Society being in the forefront to fight for the "human rights" of the oppressed San and Khoikhoi. They succeeded in influencing the passing of regulations which granted all people in the Cape equality before the law, the right to own property and to have freedom of movement. This development infuriated many Boer farmers. They decided to trek out of the Cape to establish their own kind of life in the Orange Free State, and Transvaal. Many complained of the British accepting "the intolerable doctrine that heathen blacks and christian whites should be treated on a footing of equality"⁶⁷.

After Phillip's death in 1851, the London Missionary Society and other missionaries continued his tradition of championing the cause of the blacks. John Mackenzie who served in South Africa from 1858 to 1884 and again 1891 to 1899 was a worthy successor to Phillips⁶⁸.

65. Eiselen, "Christian", 66.

66. E.W. Smith, *Robert Moffat, One of God's Gardeners* (London, 1825) 10 - 15.

67. Eiselen, "Christian", 66.

68. Du Plessis, *A History*, 137 - 153, see also 154 - 164.

Conclusion

The task of the London Missionary Society in South Africa and Madagascar was to convert the various African societies and the Malagasy to Christianity. In itself, conversion was a form of religious conquest in that it entailed discarding traditional religions to embrace a totally foreign religion. Perry Anderson has explained the role of the missionary in this conquest. He observed that :

The conversion of the native population represents even if only symbolically, its incorporation into the mental and cultural universe of the white [people]. It thus has the value, even to the most atheist and anti-clerical administration, of initiating the process of disciplined adaptation to European cultural norms... Christianity in the colonial areas is a domestication of the indigenous population : objectively, it breaks the Africans into European thought and mores ; subjectively, it frees the European of his terrors of the African by including him within the same canon as himself. At the same time, it has a crucial additional merit for any coloniser. It represents an ideal arrested threshold of acculturation for the natives. A colonial system needs a subject population with a certain minimal level of Europeanisation, for the purpose of order and exploitation. On the other hand, too great an assimilation of European culture and techniques would directly threaten the inequality on which religion offers almost the perfect device for securing the fruits of the first without incurring the dangers of the second⁶⁹.

This view was also shared by many missionaries. The process of conversion was assisted by a number of factors. Education and medical facilities were some of them. In converting indigenous people, a gradual transformation of their social - cultural organization. Part of this resulted in transforming the colonised people as consumers of European manufactured goods. John Phillips, who was the most far-sighted representative of British imperialism observed that :

While the missionaries have been employed in locating the savages among whom they labour, teaching them industrial habits, creating a demand for British manufactures, and increasing their dependence on the colony... Missionary stations are most efficient agents which can be employed to promote the international strength of our colonies and the cheapest and best military post agreement can employ⁷⁰.

On a comparative basis, the London Missionary Society in Madagascar were well ahead in their work of spreading the gospel, provision of educational and medical facilities. The Malagasy also turned to christianity in larger numbers

69. Perry Anderson, "Portugal and the End of Ultra Colonialism" Part II. *New Left Review*, 16 (1962) 102 -3.

70. Phillips, *Researches in South Africa*, Vol. 2, 227.

than in South Africa. The homogeneity of the language and the efforts of the rulers were important catalysts. The absence of these factors in South Africa and the presence of strong beliefs in traditional religions, slowed the process of conversion. This only changed when most of the precolonial socio-economic structures were dislocated forcing the African to depend on the missionary. The period between 1800 and 1900 was definitely exciting for the London Missionary Society in that they saw their work expand. Some of their missionaries like David Livingstone contributed immensely in the advance of ethnographical knowledge of Southern Africa. From his reports we have been able to capture the social-economic situation prevailing in Africa between 1850 and 1873. It should also be admitted here that the work of the London Missionary Society opened Southern Africa and Madagascar to the process of British and French colonialisation.

FAMINTINANA

Tamin'ny taona 1795 no namoronan'ny Fiangonana Kongregasionaly vitsivitsy ny London Missionary Society (LMS) ho toy ny fitaovana hoentiny maneho ny fiantsosan'Andriamanitra azy ireo ho misionera. Ny hany tanjona tamin'izany moa dia ny fampielezana ny Vaovao Mahafaly tamin'izay faritr'izao tontolo izao mbola tsy nanorenan'ny finoana kristiana faka, indrindra tany Afrika, Sina, India, ny Ranomasina Atsimo (ny nosy polineziana), ary teto Madagasikara.

Raha jerena ny asan'ny LMS tamin'ny tapany atsimon'i Afrika izay nanomboka tamin'ny taona 1798 ary niely tsikelikely nankany Zambia tamin'ny faramparan'ny taonjato faha-19, sy teto Madagasikara nanomboka tamin'ny taona 1818, dia mahatalanjona ny fahasamihafana tanteraka nisy teo amin'ny tontolo politika niasan'ny LMS. Sarotra ho an'ny LMS ny nahazo mpibebaka tao amin'ny tapany atsimon'i Afrika, izay nanjakan'ny anglisy tamin'ny ankapobeny, tamin'ny voalohany. Niova kosa anefa izany toe-javatra izany taorian'ny taona 1900 rehefa tena nofehezin'ny anglisy io faritra io. Etsy an-kilany, teto Madagasikara, nandritra ny nanjakan-dRadama I dia nalaky ery ny fampibebahana nataon'ny LMS ary notohanana'ny manam-pahefana teo antoerana izy tamin'izany. Na dia nenjehin'ny mpitondra malagasy sasany sy ny mpanjanaka frantsay izay samy nihevitra azy ho tsy nanao fanjakana aza ny Fiangonana, dia nitozo nanohy ny asany tao anatin'ny sarotra indrindra. Nitondra vokany anefa io fitozoany io satria nahazoany mpibebaka maro teo anivon'ny Hova nitondra sady nanam-pahefana. Mety hahazoana zavatra hoenti-manao fampitahana tsara ny tontolo politika tena nifanohitra niasan'ny LMS tao amin'ny tapany atsimon'i Afrika sy teto Madagasikara sy ny fahasamihafan'ny zava-bitany sy ny olana nianjady taminy.

RESUME

La London Missionary Society (LMS) a été fondée en 1795 par un certain nombre d'Eglises Congrégationalistes d'Angleterre comme un moyen d'exprimer leur vocation missionnaire. Son unique objet était de répandre l'Evangile dans les autres parties du monde, là où la Chrétienté n'a pas pris racine, en particulier en Afrique, en Chine, dans les Mers du Sud (les Iles Polynésiennes) et à Madagascar.

En regardant l'oeuvre de la LMS en Afrique du Sud, laquelle a commencé en 1798 et s'est lentement étendue vers la Zambie vers la fin du XIXème siècle, et à Madagascar où elle a commencé en 1818, l'on est vite frappé par le contraste des climats politiques dans

lesquels opérait la Société. En Afrique du Sud, qui était largement sous la sphère d'influence britannique, la Société a trouvé très difficile au départ de trouver des convertis. Cette situation a cependant changé après 1900 quand la zone est tombée sous l'administration britannique. D'autre part, à Madagascar, à l'époque de Radama I, la Société a fait des progrès rapides dans la conversion des gens et a obtenu le soutien des autorités locales. Bien que l'Eglise, à certains moments, ait été persécutée par certaines autorités locales et, plus tard, par l'administration coloniale française qui la soupçonnait de déloyauté, elle a néanmoins persévéré dans son oeuvre dans des conditions qui étaient très éprouvantes et difficiles. Sa ténacité a été payante du fait qu'elle a gagné des convertis parmi les Hova influents au pouvoir. La différence des climats politiques dans lesquels la Société a opéré en Afrique du Sud et à Madagascar, aussi bien que les différences dans les succès enregistrés et les problèmes rencontrés, offrent du matériau pour une bonne étude comparative.