

THE LONDON MISSIONARY SOCIETY AND MADAGASCAR : 1795-1818

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Part I : 1795-1811

The life and history of the people of Madagascar have been profoundly influenced by Christianity. That influence, mediated through various denominational and cultural forms, has been seen not only in the obvious areas of religious belief, practices, standards and institutions ; but also in, for example, education, medical services and architecture. The web of social life has been touched at many points. The most effective contacts have been made through missionary societies and their personnel, whose work has led to the formation of strong Malagasy Christian communities, which in their turn have affected the life of the country.

The earliest attempts to introduce Christianity were made by various Roman Catholic missionaries, especially the Portuguese Jesuits and the French Vincentians (Lazarists), over a period of about 250 years. But despite their frequently self-sacrificial efforts, by the end of the 18th century virtually nothing remained. The 19th century saw the arrival of a number of societies. Among these was the London Missionary Society (LMS), the position of which in that period is notable for a number of reasons, of which three may be mentioned. First, the LMS, whose missionaries reached Tamatave in 1818, was the first to begin work. Second, it was notable for the fact, not seen before, that out of its work there developed a new Christian community which, instead of disappearing after a few years as had been the unfortunate outcome of previous attempts, maintained an unbroken existence throughout the 19th and into the 20th century. The original LMS changed over the years and has now become the (international) Council for World Mission, standing in a new relationship to the Malagasy Christian community with which it is most closely associated.

Third, among the various societies and their associated communities, the LMS with its members and adherents achieved a pre-eminent position. Briefly, this was largely due to the advantage it gained from having been first on the scene. Apart from the period when Christianity was officially banned, there was an ambivalent link with the authorities in their policy of a partial transformation or development of society in the central province of Imerina and its expansion into a movement for national unity. In various ways it both contributed to and benefited from that link ; while at the same time the association could have some deleterious effects on the main purpose of the mission. The pre-eminent position held by the LMS was such that there can be few books about Madagascar written in any European language in the 19th century, other than purely scientific studies, which do not refer to the LMS and its varied influence on the life of the country – whether the reference be favourable or unfavourable. Modern historical studies of the period find it equally inescapable and indeed are often heavily indebted to its archives as a major source.

But why was the LMS in Madagascar at all ? The purpose of the present paper is to provide an outline answer to the following question : How did it come about that a proposal for a Protestant mission in Madagascar was made in London in 1795 ; and what steps were taken, and in what circumstances, to carry out that proposal up to the time of the arrival of the first LMS missionaries in 1818 ?

It could be held, of course, that the history of the LMS so far as Madagascar is concerned began at that latter date. That is indeed the way in which the subject has been treated by most writers : at most a few lines are given to the previous twenty years. A main reason for that treatment was evidently that the earlier history was simply not known in detail ; but at the same time there seems often to have been an underlying belief that the preparation for the mission was of very secondary importance : what mattered was the first action to be taken in Madagascar itself, and what followed from it. But history does not consist only of the immediately successful, except when seen from a restricted viewpoint. If the study of history includes the attempt to give some sort of « explanation » of the course of events (at whatever level that explanation may be), the proposals made, the hopes raised and the set-backs experienced, all taking place within a much wider and complicated network of current events, fall into at least two relevant historical series. First, they are part of the expansion of the Christian faith « beginning from Jerusalem » and its movement stage by stage towards the people of Madagascar ; and second, the history of the points of major contact between the Malagasy and other cultures.

The years of preparation can be divided into four periods : 1795 - 1798, The First Proposal ; 1798 - 1811, Vanderkemp and the South African Base ; 1811 - 1816, The Search for a Policy ; 1816 - 1818, Action Taken. To provide as full an account as possible within the limitations of space, only the first two periods are being dealt with here. The other two periods (Part 2) are left for later treatment. For the same reason, much of the context of the planning is

very summarily described ; and other important aspects are not here examined (1).

I — THE FIRST PROPOSAL : 1795-1799

The «Missionary Society»

The main influences which led to the foundation of the LMS mission in Madagascar can be succinctly categorised as broad (the general religious and cultural background, intermediate — the Society itself —, and immediate — the direct stimulus).

Among the *broad* influences attention may be drawn to four main matters. First, there was that large section of the world which by a combination of religion, culture and geography had come to form a special entity : Christendom. This was a complex community, divided within itself and yet clearly one in basic structure ; very conscious both of its identity and of what it regarded as its advanced and privileged position vis-a-vis the rest of the world. Second, within Christendom knowledge of the wider world had been growing fast in four centuries of new contacts with other areas and peoples, a process which as seen from within Christendom appeared as discovery and exploration. Europe might be described as to some extent introverted in its self-glorification, but it was in an expansive mood : it looked outwards with growing interest to distant horizons and there were the beginnings of a science of man. Third, the second half of the 18th century in Britain saw a strong religious revival, partly in reaction to what was regarded by many as the cold and unbiblical Deism of earlier decades, a major example of the revival being the Methodist movement. Fourth, partly as one of the results of that religious revival, including a growing

(1) The present account is derived from a fuller section of « A History of Christianity in Madagascar » which, after considering the introduction of certain Biblical material, including the name of Jesus, through Islamic sources and possible contacts with Christians in Africa, Asia and elsewhere, begins the main history at the year 1500 A.D. Notes and references have here been kept to a minimum.

An outline of the period from 1795 to 1818 is given in : Hardynam J.T. « Ny Nahatonga ny L.M.S. Nandefa Misionera Taty Madagasikara — 25 sept. 1795 - 18 aog. 1818 » in : *Fanasina* (Antananarivo) N^{os} 565-66, 1968. Hitherto virtually no attention has been paid to the period between the first mention of Madagascar in 1795 and the choice of missionaries from Wales over twenty years later. Ellis, who as an L.M.S. Secretary had access to the files, treats briefly of Vanderkemp's plans in his *History of Madagascar* (1838), 2, pp. 202-204. Those pages are summaries by Clark in his history of the Church (*Tantaran'ny Fiangonana eto Madagasikara*, 1887). Martin in his biography of Vanderkemp provides no systematic account but gives more references than other writers.

humanitarian concern in such questions as that of slavery, and partly as a response to new information about various hitherto little known or even unknown peoples (information made especially vivid by the reports of such men as Cook on the Pacific), a powerful missionary movement developed (2).

The conditions mentioned so far were very general and formed the background to the activities of many new organisations in the period of about thirty years from 1785 on. But in the last decade of the 18th century there was only one religious (Protestant) organisation which paid special attention to Madagascar (though a few years later there was to be a second). That was the London Missionary Society. But even that Society did not devote itself entirely to Madagascar ; it was concerned with many parts of the world. It is for that reason that it is here regarded, so far as Madagascar is concerned, as being only an *intermediate* influence at the time of its foundation : encouraging a supporter to make a specific proposal, though later, of course, when the Society made plans for a mission it became a very much more direct influence (3).

In the years leading up to the foundation of the Society personal contacts between various individuals with a missionary concern were very important. But a significant part was also played by a number of printed documents. Carey's *Enquiry*, published in 1792, was outstanding, with its statement of the missionary obligation, its statistical survey of the world and its call for action. Carey's own denomination formed the Baptist Missionary Society, which became a model and a stimulus to others. Among other important documents was Bogue's article of 1794 addressed «To the Evangelical Dissenters who practise Infant Baptism», in which he pointed out that other denominations were doing something for the conversion of «the heathen» and asked what the Dissenters were doing. Also in 1794 Horne (not a Dissenter but an Anglican) emphasised that «evangelical adherents of the different Churches *ought* to *combine* in the great enterprise». Other writers followed, notably Burder with his plea for the establishment of «a Missionary Society upon a large and liberal plan, for sending ministers of Christ to preach the Gospel among the heathen». The mouthpiece of Dissenting (or Independant) ministers, Anglican clergymen and lay people who were becoming insistent in their demand that some action should be taken was the *Evangelical Magazine*, a substantial publication founded soon after the *Enquiry*.

The outcome of all this conviction, discussion and enthusiasm was the much longed-for «Missionary Society», founded in September 1795. A few of its distinctive features must be mentioned. First, it was founded on an inter-denominational basis and was not formally linked only to one specific Church

(2) For convenient short accounts of the origins of this «modern» missionary movement, see Payne E.A. *Growth of the World Church* (1955), pp. 37-85 and Neill S. *History of Christian Missions* (1964), pp. 243-52.

(3) Strictly, the London Missionary Society began as The Missionary Society and the longer title was officially adopted until 1818. Here, however, the familiar title is generally used, despite the slight discrepancy in chronology.

(as was, for example, its forerunner the Baptist Society). That point was emphatically made in the well-known words of Bogue at the opening service : « We now have before us a pleasing spectacle, Christians of different denominations, although differing in points of church-government, united in forming a society for propagating the gospel among the heathen. This is a new thing in the Christian Church ; behold us here assembled with one accord to attend the funeral of bigotry ». Second, as to the aim of the Society, it was said that « the sole object of the Missionary Society is to spread abroad the knowledge of Christ among the heathen and other unenlightened nations ». Third, the Society's views with respect to Church Order, were stated in the *Fundamental Principle* : « As the union of God's People of various denominations, in carrying out this great work, is a most desirable Object, so to prevent, if possible, any cause of future dissension, it is declared as Fundamental principle of the Missionary Society, that our design is not to send Presbyterianism, Independency, Episcopacy, or any other form of Church order or government (about which there may be differences of opinion among serious persons), but the Glorious Gospel of the Blessed God to the heathen ; and that it shall be left (as it ever ought to be left) to the minds of the persons whom God may call into the fellowship of His Son from among them to assume for themselves such form of Church Government as to them shall appear most agreeable to the Word of God ». Fourth, what was variously referred to as « the knowledge of Christ » and the « Glorious Gospel of the Blessed God » was not seen in purely « overworldly » terms. Stated policy and practice showed very clearly that the « mission » on which the Society was engaged was regarded as being very much concerned also with the physical and intellectual condition of those peoples to whom missionaries were sent, as is indicated, for example, by the remark that « godly men who understand mechanical arts may be of signal use » (4).

With respect to its membership and internal organisation the Society was thus confident in its theology and in its ability to provide an instrument through which Christians of different denominations could work together ; nor was there any hesitation in choosing as missionaries persons of other nationalities than British, so that there was also an international element in the Society's structure. In its *Fundamental Principle* it showed an unexpected degree of ecclesiastical self-criticism, even though the inadequacy of its psychological and sociological knowledge prevented it from realising the great difficulties involved in putting such an ideal solution into practice.

But the unity of the Society's supporters in Britain and of sympathisers on the Continent was fashioned in the interests of other peoples. There were at least three important aspects of the Society's knowledge and understanding of

(4) In the facsimile edition (1961) of Carey : *Enquiry* Payne has a useful introductory essay. For the present purpose a sufficiently full account of the formation and early years of the L.M.S. is given in the standard *History* by Lovett, 1, pp. 3-113.

the wider world. It possessed or had access to the *scientific* knowledge of distant peoples as embodied in, for example, various encyclopaedic works and most vividly and most recently in the illustrated works of Cook and others. However inadequate by later standards it was the most up-to-date knowledge of the day and within a very short time of its foundation the Society's own missionaries were to provide a great deal of ethnographic and historical information about the peoples among whom they lived and worked. There was also undoubtedly an *emotional* aspect, owing much to the romantic tone of the explorers' travels and to an interest in other cultures. But in one sense the most important aspect was the *theological*, which was evident in two ways. First, the fact that the main interest of the Society was in very distant peoples whom, with very few exceptions, none of its supporters would ever see, implied that its monotheistic theology refused any idea of *cuius regio, eius religio* as between Christian and non-Christian religions. The God to whom the Society referred in its *Fundamental Principle* was held to be the God who had authority over the whole Earth and the whole of mankind. Second, the Society saw the «human situation» of those distant peoples in terms of its understanding of the attitude of the monotheistic God in whom it believed to non-Christian individuals and communities. That situation was seen as an objective «religious» fact. Those held to be in such a situation were described, as in the statement of the Society's Object, as «the heathen» – to whom the «Gospel» had to be made known, so that what was held to be a broken relationship between men and God might be restored and life be lived according to a new pattern, with a new centre.

Such in very brief outline were the aims and outlook of the Missionary Society. But although its concern was universal its resources were not unlimited. There would have to be a selection of certain areas rather than others. The general aims therefore did not imply that the Society would necessarily interest itself in Madagascar. There would have to be a specific reason for it to turn its attention in that direction at that time. In so far as the initiation of a movement can be pin-pointed and attributed to an individual, an action and a date, the *immediate* influence which brought Madagascar to the notice of the Missionary Society and eventually led to the arrival of the LMS in Madagascar can be indicated. The individual concerned was Captain Andrew Burn ; the action he took was to write a memoir proposing a mission to Madagascar ; and the date was 25 September 1795, when the memoir, along with others making other proposals, was presented at the first General Meeting of the Society in London (5).

(5) The presentation of the memoir is mentioned in the *L.M.S. Report 1796*, p. 41. The simplified analysis in terms of scientific knowledge, emotional attitudes and theological beliefs, leading to a compulsion to take action are not regarded as applying to the L.M.S. alone. Along with some other relevant factors and with perhaps some modification of content in individual cases, similar conditions were found in other organisations of the time with a «missionary» outlook.

Burn's Memoir

The contemporary archives do not enlarge on the identity of the writer of the memoir on Madagascar. Further, Lovett the author of the official history of the LMS appears not to have known nor even to have wondered why the writer had any special interest in Madagascar. But even though the name is misspelled in the Minutes, «Byrn» can be identified as Andrew Burn (1742-1814). Burn was a professional soldier who was later to rise to the rank of Major-General. In the early 1790's, after many years of service overseas, he was shore-based in Britain. Now in continual contact with the cultural, social and religious life of the country, he was able to put forward his own strongly-held views. As he himself indicated, a certain painful experience led to a religious crisis at the age of 29, which became a turning-point in his life. The new outlook which that engendered, coupled with a growing openness to the powerful evangelistic, humanitarian and missionary ideas of the time led Burn to write pamphlets not only on personal religion but also on the highly contentious subject of sugar produced by slave-labour. Writing passionately out of his own experience in the West Indies, he addressed to his compatriots the slogan : «Abstain from Sugar and Slavery falls». To that moral and strategic argument he did not hesitate to add such colourful descriptions of the conditions in which sugar was produced as would turn the stomachs of many readers and cause them to demand, in revulsion, that action should be taken.

Such was the outlook, character and style of the man who wrote the memoir proposing a mission to Madagascar. As with the sugar question, he wrote not from hearsay but from direct experience : for in 1780 his ship had spent six weeks at St. Augustines' Bay. The fact that his proposal concerned Madagascar rather than, say, Sumatra (the island from which he was returning to Britain) suggests that Madagascar and its people made a special impression on him — an impression which was still fresh in his mind fifteen years later when the Missionary Society was founded. Here again a direct link can be traced. Burn was stationed near Gosport, where the Independent minister was none other than Bogue, who wrote the letter of 1794 proposing the formation of the Society. Bogue had close contacts with the naval personnel of the area and it is evident that he and Burn were acquainted. It is Bogue who is explicitly mentioned as having presented the memoir by «Byrn» in May 1796.

The memoir has not survived. It is possible that as its sponsor Bogue may have kept the document within his own control when, with himself no doubt

(6) Information about Burn is to be found in his *Memoirs*, a biography which, however, as being largely compiled from his papers, is largely autobiographical. It is probable that Carey was influenced by some of Burn's writings, notably that proposing abstention from sugar as a weapon to be used against slavery (as mentioned in the text). Burn also influenced Captain Wilson, captain of the L.M.S. ship the *Duff*, which carried its first missionaries to the Pacific.

(7) Board Minutes 13 May 1976. A hint of Bogue's links with Burn is provided by the fact that he subscribed to two copies of the *Memoirs*.

a member of the committee concerned, the proposal about Madagascar was considered. In that case, it may well have disappeared in the confusion of Bogue's papers at home at a later date (8). But fortunately there is a way out of what would otherwise be an historical cul-de-sac. Part at least of a journal which Burn kept in Madagascar is available in the *Memoirs* published posthumously in 1815 (9). In the absence therefore of the original document of 1795-96 the *precise* form of the case he made for a mission to Madagascar and the exact nature of his proposals cannot be known with certainty, an impression of his knowledge of the island and of his attitude towards the Malagasy may be gained from his other writings ; and further deductions can be made from other circumstances.

Burn's account may here be simply analysed into two main parts : first, a general description of the conditions of life, with some consideration of future commercial prospects ; second, an impression of the people's character and religious condition, again with a look to the future, if action could be taken in *their* interest. Burn indicates something of the atmosphere of life as he found it, by recounting a visit to the local chief and a further reflection which shows that what he had to say applied, as he believed, to most of the island :

« He is a fine looking lad of seventeen years of age, of an open, generous disposition, but utterly ruined by drinking... The knowing ones take advantage of his youth and of this failing, and do just as they please... Tyranny and oppression, we have daily seen, are no strange things in Madagascar... (The island) is divided into seven or eight districts, governed by so many kings, who are continually at war with one another ; and the principal trade they carry on with Europeans is for powder and arms to facilitate their mutual destruction... fine beef is cheap... But the destructive wars, in which the nations engage, frequently obliging them to change their place of abode, greatly prevent the cultivation of the land ».

Whether or not Burn included the commercial prospects of Madagascar in his missionary proposal, at least his notes make it clear that he thought that its geographical position gave the island a great potential commercial advantage, especially if as he seems to imply, greater unity could be brought into the relations between the still warring groups :

« Were this island in the hands of a civilised people, it might supply the western world with every commodity that either the torrid or temperate zone can produce, for it lies in both ».

But Burn had a more direct interest in the religious life of the Malagasy. The people, he said, believed in One Creator, but thought him to be « too great and powerful to hear their prayers... ». They had « a great faith in a world of spirits » and there were « a kind of prophets who pretend to great familiarity

(8) It is possible, as has been suggested by I.M. Fletcher the former L.M.S. Archivist (in a personal letter) that the memoir disappeared by the « confusion » of the papers in Bogue's study.

(9) Burn's account of Madagascar are given in the *Memoirs* 1, pp. 208-18. Only a few points are here mentioned as the notes have been treated more fully in a separate study.

with the guardian spirits». Burn's evaluation of these religious beliefs and practices did not lead to simple scorn or rejection. Three passages are especially important as forming the background to his eventual proposal. In the first he engages in historical speculation, based on a literal understanding of the history of persons mentioned in Genesis and thought that the Malagasy were «the immediate descendants of Ham, the son of Noah». To that degree, they therefore seemed to him to have a special link with the Judaeo-Christian tradition (10). In a second passage he records his reflections one Sunday when he looked inwards to his personal beliefs and spiritual history and outwards to what he saw as the «human situation» of the people around him. His observations led him to say in the third place that : «It is lamentable that some attempts are not made to convert the Madagasses to Christianity». For the Malagasy were, according to his experience, «a sociable, humane kind of people». He thought therefore «that if a thorough knowledge of the language were obtained», an attempt to convert the people to Christianity might be successful.

The memoir presented to the Society is thus likely to have been based on the journal. But in the light of Burn's concern, the actual proposal may well have been made with something of the passionate tone and descriptive force used in his onslaught on slavery and the sugar-trade. A further point to be made is that it is likely to have been specific. According to the record the memoir simply proposed a mission in very general terms : to Madagascar. But in the light of the circumstances of the time and of Burn's own direct Knowledge of the island it is possible to deduce that the proposal was not in fact conceived in so general a manner. The east side it would have been difficult to obtain a footing because of the position held by France in the Mascarene Islands and their resulting contacts with those on the east coast. British contacts, however, were largely confined to St. Augustine's Bay, on the west coast. British control of Mauritius and the sudden development of power in Imerina were not yet envisaged. It is therefore very probable that Burn did not leave it entirely to the Society to choose a site : he would suggest St. Augustine's Bay : or possibly some other site on the west coast.

It remained to be seen what would be the reaction of the Directors. Madagascar was only one among other countries suggested. At that first meeting in September 1795 there were other proposals relating to Surat, the West Indies and part of Russia. Burn's concern and enthusiasm might have to yield before the claims of other areas. But in fact the sober list just enumerated gives too restrained an impression. Lovett describes the situation in the early days of the Society :

«the outburst of spiritual enthusiasm... (led to) the advocacy by ardent friends of almost every kind of possible and impossible missionary enterprise».

(10) Giving some Biblical references Burn proposes a theory that the descendants of Ham probably became skilful boat-builders and reached the east coast of Africa, before sailing to Madagascar. Copland S. in his *History of Madagas-*

It was almost as though every name on the maps of distant countries beyond the familiar limits of Christendom was felt by some to be a challenge and an opportunity. But even so there could be no sudden decisions. The method to be followed was that agreed at the General Meeting in May 1796, in connection with Burn's memoir and other suggestions :

«all those Proposals for Missions be referred to the consideration of the Directors... and that they be empowered to carry them, or any of them, into Execution, if they think proper».

In the event, some of these enterprises were begun, only to be quickly abandoned. The «consideration» they received, or the information available, had evidently been inadequate. Others, however, were more solidly based and led to the undertaking of the substantial missions which were to become the Society's main work : South Seas (1796), South Africa (1798), India (1804), West Indies (1807) and China (1807). Madagascar was eventually to be added to that list. But it was to take twenty-three years from the time of the earliest suggestion (11).

Image of a Distant Island

What did «Madagascar» mean to the Directors as they considered the proposal for two years and when they took their decision at the end of that period ? No record exists of the exact nature of the study which may have been undertaken nor of the precise course of the discussion. But on the assumption that they must have turned to the most obvious sources of information, it is possible to gain some idea of the way in which they saw the island and its people. There were four main sources which they could have used : individuals who had been to the island ; printed accounts ; pictorial illustrations ; maps.

Among travellers, Burn was himself the most obvious example of someone who could report at first hand. If only in conversation with Bogue, it is probable that Burn would provide material which went beyond the facts given in the memoir. Again, though this is only supposition, it is likely that Bogue, through his connection with the port, would have some link with persons who had touched at the island on the route to or from the East.

Of printed sources there was one which, though very brief, none in the missionary world could miss. Carey in his *Enquiry* presented the south-west Indian Ocean in the following manner :

car (1822), pp. 58-61 obviously made use of and extended these ideas without directly mentioning their source and concluded that the Malagasy arrived «long before the Israelites were in bondage in Egypt».

(11) Lovett *History*, 1, p. 101. A short overall view of the work of the L.M.S. in its first 150 years, starting with the areas mentioned in the text, is given in Northcott C. *Glorious Company* (1945).

EXTENT

Countries	Length	Breadth	Number of Inhabitants	Religion
Isle of Madagascar	1 000	220	2,000,000	Pagans and Mahometans
..... St Mary (.....)	54	9	5,000	French Papists
..... Comora Isles (<i>sic</i>)	5	<i>in number</i>	5,000	Mahometans
..... Mauritius	150	<i>in compass</i>	10,000	French Papists

A major recent book of geography described Madagascar as the largest island in the world, favourably placed for (European) commerce and added that it was a pity « that so noble an island, and so populous, should continue so long uncivilised... and estranged from God and Virtue ». The implied appeal to consider what were regarded as the needs of the people had also fairly recently appeared in one of the best-known reviews of the time, in the report of the wreck of a ship on the south-west coast. High tribute was paid to the local people, for, it was said, the passengers :

« experienced from the rude and uncultivated natives every possible assistance and relief which savage life was capable to afford, and surely such disinterested attention as would have done honour to the most civilised Christians... Such striking examples of humanity among men whom we are accustomed to consider as savages will, we hope, have some influence in bespeaking the goodwill and regard of those among the civilised world who may have occasion to visit them ».

Points of view and literary styles have changed considerably over the intervening years and these quotations must be seen within the context of their day. But in that context their style and tone may have been effective out of proportion to their length (12).

But very much more important were two major works which had been published within the previous five years, which any deliberate search for information would have brought to light. The more comprehensive was the English version of Rochon's *Voyage to Madagascar*. Rochon did not give as much information as might have been expected about the character and beliefs of the Malagasy ; what little he has to say is mostly cast in the form of a priori reflections on the state of the « savage », based on the views of Rousseau. Not all that he had to say would meet with the unqualified approval of those whose

(12) Burn went to sea again in March 1796, that is, two months before his memoir was again considered by the Directors. But there would have been an opportunity in the months since the previous September for Bogue at least to discuss the matter with him, though there is no direct evidence to that effect. For available information, see Carey *Enquiry*, pp. 54, 63 ; Morden R. *Geography Rectified* (1793), p. 538 ; *Gentleman's Magazine* 1793, p. 201 ; 1794, pp. 377-78.

outlook was moulded by the Evangelical Revival. But they would be more sympathetic to the criticisms which Rochon made (even though a Frenchman) of his fellow-countrymen's acts of «injustice and oppression» in Madagascar in the 17th century. The second major work was the lengthy account of his adventures and colonial plans given by the bombastic Benyowski, relating especially to the north-east coast. These two works, besides providing a certain amount of detailed information, would also convey something of the «atmosphere» of the island. It is possible (though there is less certainty about this as the last edition had been published 45 years before) that the Directors knew of the *Journal*, thought at the time to be entirely the work of Drury, who claimed to have spent many years in captivity in Madagascar after being shipwrecked. For the most part it described life in southern and western areas not as conceived according to philosophical theories but from day-to-day experience. It depicted a real society with both the highlights and the shadows (13).

A third source of information was provided by pictorial illustrations. These were not plentiful, Benyowski's book contained a number showing conditions on the east coast. The account of the shipwreck was accompanied by drawings which showed Malagasy at St. Augustine's Bay. Drury's book contained engravings which were only artists' representations of incidents in the text ; but they helped to depict dramatically what could be the attitude of the people to strangers in certain circumstances (such as the capture of survivors from a wrecked ship and the leading of an European to execution) as well as some features of local life, including plundering, and religious ceremonies. Maps were the fourth main source of information. They were available in standard atlases ; but the largest and most detailed likely to be available were those in the books of Rochon and Drury.

From these various sources in English the Directors would be able to obtain considerable knowledge about Madagascar. A thumb-nail sketch of the picture they might have of it would show it as a very large island on the much-frequented route to the East. Known place-names were almost entirely confined to the coast ; there were few details about inland areas and their peoples. The island appeared to be «populous», with perhaps two million inhabitants. Information about them derived from personal experience was confined almost entirely to the western side. The island was thought to have some valuable resources and to be productive and on that account and because of its strategic position could become an important source of commodities for European trade. Evidence about the people's attitude to strangers was conflicting, partly because available information related to different places, et different dates. But the most recent suggested that they could be very helpful. So far as religion was concerned, the people in Madagascar and in neighbouring islands were

(13) Rochon A. *Voyage to Madagascar* (1792) ; Benyowski M. *Memoirs and Travels...* (1790). Whatever may be the truth about the composition of the published tract, in the matter of conveying the atmosphere and conditions in Madagascar, Drury's account in his *Madagascar* seems truer to life than the other books mentioned. The latest edition available would be that of 1750.

divided into three groups. What was described as a «heathen» religion was to be found among the Malagasy, who were thought to believe in God (though with what was regarded as a very inadequate understanding) and also in evil spirits. Some of their religious rites were known. *Mahometanism* was found in the Comoro Islands, and also to some extent among the Malagasy. *Christianity* was represented by several thousands of persons regarded by the Directors as «Papists» (qualified by the, at that time, politically loaded term «French»), in Mauritius Bourbon (Reunion) and in the island of St.Mary, very close to Madagascar's east coast.

On the basis of all this information an outline picture of the island and its people was beginning to take shape. That picture seems to have been regarded as reliable and encouraging. As such it inevitably gave rise to a further question, which would have to be answered before a clear decision about the proposed mission could be taken : how the general approach to the island should be made and the area to which the missionaries should go. There were three main courses of action which could be followed.

The first possibility was that the missionaries should be sent direct from Britain to Madagascar, as had been done for the mission in the Pacific. While in theory any coastal site on the map might have been chosen, the circumstances already outlined probably made the choice of St. Augustine's Bay almost inevitable. Ships sailing to the East might call there ; or use might even be made of the Society's own ship, the *Duff*. Second, it would be possible to start in the Comoro Islands, with a mission among the Moslem inhabitants ; from there it would be a comparatively short distance to the west coast of Madagascar. Such a plan was indeed suggested to the Directors by an anonymous correspondent. The proposal was not received until just after the Directors had in fact taken a decision about Madagascar ; but the general idea may well have already been discussed. To the correspondent, the Comorians seemed «to be a very superior class», especially those on the island of Johanna. He therefore proposed that a mission should be started on that island ; as missionary work it might be «first fruits» in view of an eventual mission to Madagascar ; there was, he said, «little doubt, if the good Word or God took root in the former, it would soon be welcomed in the latter». The third possibility was to link Madagascar in some way with mission (already decided on) in South Africa. From that African base missionaries could be transferred to Madagascar ; or at the very least further information could be gathered, in the light of which the policy to be followed could be further considered.

By 1798 the name of Madagascar had been before the Society for over two years. It was less easy to take a decision about it than about South Africa. But the pressure to take a decision about any people who had been brought to the notice of the Directors continued. It can be illustrated by quotations from

The Directors probably never knew that there was in fact a Malagasy in London, who had been brought there by a Roman Catholic missionary (Hardyman J.T. «The Plans of Halnat for a Mission in Madagascar»).

addresses given at the Annual Meeting in May 1798, even though the remarks were not intended by the speakers to refer to Madagascar rather than to any other country : James Cockin described the non-Christian world as it appeared : a theological level of interpretation :

« From a view of the state of the world, with respect to religion, we see how many countries and kingdoms there are, sitting in darkness and the region of the shadow of death... Should we not have pity on those parts of the world on which the true light has not shone...? ».

He went on to refer to « the Gospel (which) like the sun, has light and heat for the whole world ». It was further defined by James Moody, who described it in terms of the « dominion of Jesus--a spiritual dominion of kindness, benevolence and condescension » directed towards « the Heathen ». In the light of that view of the world, Cockin put the question : « Why then do we sit still ? » (14).

The attention given by the Directors to the plethora of suggestions they received showed that they had no intention of sitting still. So far as Madagascar was concerned, they decided on the third of the three possible courses of action already indicated. Burn's proposal would not be rejected : it would be linked with the new mission in South Africa. It would be clearly mentioned in the *Instructions* given to John Vanderkemp, the leader, and his fellow missionaries. For the following dozen years at least the fortunes of the proposal for a mission to Madagascar were to be very largely at the mercy of the frequently stormy conditions in which the Missionary Society had to carry out its work in South Africa.

II – VANDERKEMP AND THE SOUTH AFRICAN BASE : 1798 - 1811

As the project for Madagascar was set within the context of the Africa mission, it is essential to be aware both of the general situation in South Africa and of the main activities of the mission. Only so can the plans made and the time-table followed in their formulation be understood.

Vanderkemp in the South African Context

Attention can be drawn to only a few of the most relevant features of life in South Africa at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries. Bounded by the sea on three sides, the country under European control did have an official northern boundary on land ; but in practice that boundary was closer to being a moving horizon reaching ever deeper into the heart of the continent. From the south the area north of the boundary appeared as an opportunity ; to the Government it often seemed to be a source

(14) Aspasio to L.M.S. 4 may 1799 ; Cockin, in (L.M.S. Annual) *Sermons*, 1798, p. 41.

of danger and of armed attack. The controlled area was occupied by a mixed population within which the clearest distinctions were between Africans, Europeans, «Malays» and those of mixed parentage. These groups were not all homogeneous. Among the Africans, the most important groups were the Kaffirs (Bantu), the Hottentots (Khokhoi) and the Bushmen (San). Among the Europeans the Boers of Dutch origin were dominant, but there were also those of French, German and British origin. The «Malays» were mostly slaves, for the most part from the East. With the varying backgrounds, customs and aims of the various groups the stage was set for an almost inevitable conflict of interests, even though at any one moment two groups might seek each other's help against a common opponent.

Political and administrative control had been exercised in much of the area since 1652 by the Dutch. But the effects of internecine European wars and of the consequent treaties, as well as fears about revolutionary politics led to the occupation of the Cape by the British in 1795. Dutch control was restored peaceably in 1803, but the British returned in 1806. These major changes, coupled with the changes in personnel, led to changes in general policies and in some of the laws and the manner of applying them. Much depended on the personal views and character not only of the Governors but also of local administrators. In the Foreground were the requirements of the economy, especially for labour, and of public order ; but the whole was coloured by the powerful claims of allegiance to the mother countries (the Netherlands and Britain). There were many Africans within the officially administered area ; but beyond the limits of European control there were other African peoples with their own political leaders and military power, who could raid the European area and also resist further expansion.

In religion, the majority of Europeans would have described themselves as Christians, though many it would seem were not well instructed in their faith. The Dutch Reformed Church could be described as the Established Church and tended to look jealously on the «intrusion» of other official Christian bodies from elsewhere. That was a main reason why the Moravians, who began work at the Cape in 1792, were «harassed by Government and by religious leaders», though they fared better under British control. The Africans had their own religious beliefs and practices, but except for those under direct Christian influence were regarded as «heathen» (15).

The (London) Missionary Society began work in 1798 in the person of Vanderkemp and two colleagues. He was Dutch – and so might have been

(15) Troup *South Africa*, pp. 75-85 ; du Plessis *Christian Missions*, pp. 61-136. In addition to the groups mention there was also a considerable number of persons of «mixed» origin. Conditions in South Africa can be set against a wider background by consulting Toussaint A. *Histoire de l'Océan Indien* (1961), pp. 152-212.

approved of by his compatriots. He worked for a British mission — and so might have been approved of by the British. In each case he did in fact win some favour. But the energetic campaign for the rights of the African population which he and others engaged in led to an ambivalent relationship with whichever authority was in control. Among the missionaries sent out in the first fifteen years, Vanderkemp stood head and shoulders above his colleagues. Special attention must be focussed on him, for in that period he was the most important figure in the mission in Africa and also in that proposed for Madagascar.

Vanderkemp, born in 1747 in Rotterdam, was a man of striking character with an unusual history. Intellectually brilliant, but pleasure-loving and self-willed, with a tendency to arrogance which perhaps never entirely left him, he began as a young man to lead what was regarded as a rather wild life. He thought of himself as a Deist. But at the age of twenty-two a personal tragedy led to a religious experience which changed not only his personal character but his whole outlook. He heard with interest of the foundation of the Missionary Society in London and actively promoted its interests in Holland. That was not difficult for one of whom it was said that he was then «advanced in years, had retired from the duties of his profession and employed his leisure in literary pursuits, and possessed a good property». But Vanderkemp acted in character when at the «advanced» age of forty-eight he offered himself to the Society for service overseas. His ability and his sincerity were such that he was soon accepted and appointed to South Africa.

At home in a dozen languages, a former Army officer, a trained doctor, the author of books on medicine as well as theology, and with a ranging mind which covered other interests such as chemistry, Vanderkemp had many advantages over his junior colleagues. On a wider scale he was outstanding in the South Africa of his day and the history books cannot ignore him. For when he put his skills to the service of the Christian faith which impelled to come out of retirement and undertake new work in a distant country, it was with the full force of his personality and moral fervour. The observe was that he often lacked tact and sometimes himself created difficulties which might have been avoided. But a strong man was needed in the situation in which he had to work. John Philip, another strong character who took on Vanderkemp's mantle some years later wrote of him :

Dr. Vanderkemp's mind was truly independent in all its movements. His letters to the Governor etc. might have too much sharpness in them, but it may be urged in his defence that his provocations were very great ; that his very fault arose from his instructive abhorrence of injustice and oppression.

Again, Vanderkemp has been described as «an anti-tidal swimmer in human seas» who was «bound to raise enmities, and by the very edge of his zeal to provoke man to wrath». Even without that extra feature to intensify opposition, his openly declared Christian judgment on the situation he found at the

Cape meant that «every weapon that could be used against him – slander, misrepresentation, covert influences and open force – was freely and constantly employed to cripple him and, if possible, to terminate» his work. The feelings of many Europeans against him (though themselves Christians) is illustrated by the story of the church at Graaf Reinet, still current there over fifty years later :

... the insurgent boers of that day, then in arms against the government, insisted as one of the conditions of peace, upon having the pulpit washed, because in it, Dr. Vanderkemp had, with the sanction of the commissioner, preached to the people of colour resorting to the place.

The fires of opposition were also fuelled by what were regarded as eccentricities of dress and life-style demeaning for a highly educated European and especially perhaps by his marriage to one who was not a European. But Vanderkemp's force of character carried him through (16).

Among his colleagues, the one who was most closely associated with Vanderkemp was John Read. Of him it has been said that he was

a very distinguished young man. He was to spend the rest of his life in South Africa and his service can also be described as distinguished. He lacked the intellectual ability of Vanderkemp and was often more diffident. He was an honest, hardworking, sympathetic man ; not, however, trained in exact habits of mind.

In his moral fervour he resembled Vanderkemp. Even the latter was so convinced of the moral rightness of the general struggle for justice that he failed to attempt the fullest possible verification of the facts in individual incidents – in what were, admittedly, very obscure conditions. That was all the more likely to happen with Read. In all, including Vanderkemp and Read, there were twenty-eight missionaries, though for different reasons some did not remain long with the Society. They were mainly of Dutch and German origin, with only five Britons and one Negro from Guiana. Although based on London, the Society showed that it had an international outlook and an ecumenical policy for personnel (17).

The course of the mission in Africa was strongly affected by the interplay of the various factors in the situation – and the mission itself, notably through the views expressed and the actions taken by Vanderkemp and Read, soon be-

(16) An anonymous memoir of Vanderkemp was published soon after his death. There one main biography in English (other than separate articles) by Martin. There is a study in Dutch (which hardly refers to Madagascar) : W. van Oostelij Bruyn (1896). For references to material in the text. see Philip J. *Researches in South Africa* (1840) 1, p. 65 ; Lovett *op. cit.* 1, p. 495 ; Ellis W. *Three Visits to Madagascar* (1859) p. 210.

(17) *Evangelical Magazine* 1803, p. 200. Born in 1777 Read was 30 years Vanderkemp's junior. See also Martin *op. cit.*, 179 ; Lovett *op. cit.*, pp. 570-71.

came very important. In the period up to Vanderkemp's death three phases can be distinguished. Because of the dependence of the subsidiary project on the larger mission, the same pattern is to be seen also in the planning for the Madagascar project. In each phase, therefore, conditions in Africa, especially those most closely connected with Vanderkemp, will be briefly described, and then the proposals for Madagascar.

«MADAGASCAR... WITHIN YOUR REACH» : 1798-1802

South Africa

The missionaries were warmly welcomed on arrival and there is no reason to doubt the sincerity of that welcome. But there was in fact a serious conflict between on the one hand the principles and aims of the Directors and their missionaries and on the other the views and activities of many in South Africa. This divergence of views soon became obvious and foreshadowed the difficulties of later years.

The missionaries were concerned with «whole nations and tribes of heathen» and it was symbolic of their concern that in less than a week after his arrival Vanderkemp set out on his first extended journey. In this first phase, while two other colleagues worked among the Bushmen, Vanderkemp and another missionary worked among two main groups in outlying areas – the Kaffirs and the Hottentots. The missionaries, with a strong sense of obligation, had no doubt about their aim and had no hesitation in choosing (within the limits permitted by the Government) whatever methods they thought to be best. But matters looked very different to the Boer settlers, who were often attacked by the Kaffirs. They were angry that the missionaries should pay so much attention to their attackers. Vanderkemp was therefore regarded as exacerbating their difficulties. Again, the missionaries were also associated with the Hottentots, who sought their non-military protection against the Kaffirs. With feelings running high, some Boers eventually attacked both groups at Graaf Reinet while Vanderkemp was there, in what was virtually a rebellion against central authority. Feelings ran so high against Vanderkemp that not only was there at one time deliberate misrepresentation of his intentions and actions (which misled the central Government) but also, it seems, a plot to murder him.

Within the framework of a common Christianity, the relations between the incoming missionaries and the existing (European) Christian community can be seen at two levels. It has already been noted that by the Reformed Church the missionaries were regarded as more or less intruders and so far as possible were kept at a distance. Certain individual Boers were friendly and helpful but many others, though Christians, were strongly opposed to the missionaries because of their attitudes and actions with respect to the African peoples. These circumstances helped to reinforce the policy whereby the missionaries should concentrate on the «unevangelised» areas.

«The South African Society for Promoting the Extension of Christ's Kingdom» had been founded as a result of a letter from the Directors in London and of Vanderkemp's encouragement. Great things were expected of it in working with the missionaries and in generally forwarding the purposes of the Missionary Society, which was prepared to work through it in many respects, as being a local Society. But some incidents in this first phase soon revealed a basic difference in outlook, even when the local Society had been formed by persons with a mission-oriented enthusiasm. One matter concerned the position of the slaves, of whom there were in Cape Town alone nearly six thousand, forming about half the population. The missionaries were permitted by the Government and by the established Church to engage in educational and religious work among them. But then the missionaries raised their sights higher. Their proposal for a fund for the purchase of the freedom of the slaves was referred by the Directors in London to the South African Society, as being the missionary organisation on the spot. That Society was not, however, prepared to accept and try to implement such a proposal, evidently regarding it as a very delicate matter with economic and social implications which would prove very awkward for the dominant groups, including its own individual members. A second difference of opinion concerned missionary work. The South African Society was quite justifiably concerned to engage in work among non-Christians within the area of the established Church, but had little enthusiasm for anything further afield, whereas the missionaries appointed from London, while recognising the need for such work thought mostly of the peoples with whom little contact had been made. Third, in line with the point of view just indicated, the South African Society seemed to hope that men who had been appointed by the Directors as missionaries to, implicitly, the «unevangelised» peoples, might on the basis of authority given to it by the Directors be appointed as ministers to already established churches (18).

Plans for Madagascar

It was to South Africa that the missionaries had been appointed and conditions were such that they could not be expected to have much opportunity to consider work elsewhere. To guide them, the Directors had given them «Instructions» which dealt fully with the way in which the mission was to be carried on. But the Instructions did not stop there ; there was a further suggestion about another area where a mission might be started : Madagascar. In correspondence other areas too were mentioned.

(18) Lovett *op. cit.*, 1, pp. 481-97 ; Martin *op. cit.*, pp. 73-116 ; Clinton *op. cit.*, pp. 1-33. For the South African Missionary Society, see du Plessis *op. cit.*, pp. 91-98 and Clinton *op. cit.* pp. 13-15, 27-33.

... we cannot but suggest to you one very interesting subject... namely, the large and populous island of Madagascar which... is entirely within your reach. This place has already claimed the particular attention of our Society, as a very inviting field of Missionary labour. The manner of the natives, in the districts frequently visited by Europeans, are uniformly known to be hospitable, open and sincere. In that island it would give us peculiar satisfaction to have a mission set on foot.

The Directors went on to suggest how this might be carried out in relation to the work in South Africa. Evidently two possibilities were envisaged. The first was that the mission in Africa would be *successful*. In that case the Madagascar project could be carried out as an additional area of work. This implied that no detailed plan was proposed ; it was left to the judgment of the missionary staff in Africa, especially Vanderkemp :

Without meaning to urge this to the exclusion of other great objects you have in view, we suggest, that it may be practicable to visit that island, after you have gained a footing in the Caffre, or in any other African nation, and either begin missionary work by detaching two of your brethren thither, or, if this should be advisable, from the smallness of your number and the encouragement you may, with the blessing of God, meet with on the Continent... then your visit to the island, and acquiring particular information of all that would be interesting to us, in preparing a future mission to the island, would be an important and useful service rendered to the Society.

But there was a second possibility – that the mission in South Africa might meet with *failure*. The «inscrutable providence of God» might allow «enemies and obstacles» to «prevent... the conversion» of African peoples. But even if there were to be failure, the missionaries were not to be «discouraged or dismayed». For there still lay before them «an immense field of Missionary exertion». They could consider «Africa, Madagascar, the shores of the Red Sea, Arabia, the Persian Gulf, the Malabar coast» – and in any one or more of those areas they could «attempt to erect the Gospel standard».

In short, if the mission in Africa were successful, it was very probable that one could be started in Madagascar. On the other hand, if it were not successful, the missionaries would have to consider where they might go ; Madagascar was still on the list – but only as one among several other possible areas. To that extent, its chances were perhaps less promising. But in any case the Directors wanted to know more :

We commit to you, brethren, the copy of a short account of the island of Madagascar, which was read with general approbation at a General Meeting of our Society in 1796... Though the object of a mission to Madagascar was therefore recognised by our Society further information is requisite to the undertaking ; and we hope to find that brother Vanderkemp is taking measures to furnish us with it.

The «short account» can only have been Burn's Memoir. The request to supplement it was not forgotten and within six weeks of his arrival at the Cape, Vanderkemp sent a first report. It was based partly on information derived

from Truter, a member of the Judicial Council, who had lived for a time in Madagascar and who would always be ready to help missionaries intending to go there ; and partly on his association with Malagasy at the Cape. The climate, he reported, was said to be unhealthy ; but that was in fact true of « Europeans... unacquainted with the manner of avoiding noxious influences ». It was not necessary for a missionary to be able to use the Dutch language, as « the inhabitants are rather acquainted with the English tongue ». From St. Augustine's Bay there was « an easy way of coasting along the West coast... from south to north by large canoes ». Of the various « kingdoms » into which the island was divided, Truter recommended « Morandavia » as « fittest » for a mission.

On the basis of this information and advice, Vanderkemp made his recommendations. He was convinced « that a mission to this Island would be a desirable object ». If the Directors still approved, a mission should be begun in two stages, First, missionaries should not (as the Directors had envisaged) be removed from the staff in South Africa. Three or four should be appointed in London specifically for Madagascar and be sent to the Cape to prepare themselves. They « would find sufficient opportunity to be perfectly instructed in the Malagasy language » — presumably by some of the Malagasy slaves. Second, the Society's ship the Duff should carry the missionaries from the Cape to Madagascar. Evidently a mission on the west coast was intended ; but Vanderkemp did not himself explicitly choose between St. Augustine's Bay (which seems to have been Burn's favoured site) and Morondava (favoured by Truter). It is possible that Vanderkemp saw himself in terms of this plan as one of the missionaries to go to Madagascar. But it seems more likely on the face of it, especially in view of the fact that he expected missionaries to be appointed from London, that when he drew up this first plan he saw himself only as an informant.

The statement about Madagascar and some heartening news about Africa were well received by the Directors :

The prospects you present to us warm our Hearts, and will immediately produce... the most active Exertions to send you Helpers for the great work of Missions, among the Caffirs and Boshemen and to consider the eligibility of a Mission to Madagascar.

But the Directors were still not ready to take an immediate decision and again asked for more information about what they later described as « so very important a Subject ». Vanderkemp was encouraged to obtain more details from a Mr. Gold. The Directors themselves wrote to the South African Missionary Society, which it was hoped would provide not only information but also « assistance » such as « might lead to the establishment of a Mission on the large and populous island of Madagascar. They did not yet appreciate that Society's lack of enthusiasm for distant missionary work.

The aim both of Vanderkemp and of the Directors was clearly that a mission should be started in the island of Madagascar Progress towards that

end was slow. But the missionaries found, perhaps to their surprise, that at least a beginning could be made in missionary work among Malagasy. Among the thousands of slaves known as «Malays» in and around Cape Town were a number of Malagasy, as well as some others who appear to have been living there in connection with some form of work contract. Some at least of these Malagasy must have benefited from the educational and religious facilities provided by the missionaries and would have been included in the proposed scheme whereby slaves could obtain their liberty (19).

«TO SEE A MISSION ESTABLISHED» : 1802-1806

South Africa

The second phase was dominated by the change in political authority, the formation of institutions for the Hottentots, especially Bethelsdorp, the demand for justice ; and the reactions of some to these significant activities of the missionaries.

Except for the first year, political authority was in the hands of the Batavian Republic. The British had regarded the Cape as an area to be handed back to the Dutch at the end of the war in Europe and were not prepared to make radical changes in the life of the country ; they were indeed largely concerned with the military aspects of the situation. The Batavian Republic, on the other hand, in part influenced by some of the ideas of the French Revolution, developed a broader and in contemporary terms a more constructive policy.

For the LMS the liberal ideas of the new authority could be an advantage and help was received, for example, for Bethelsdorp. But its position vis-a-vis the Government changed in that after a period during which it was of the same nationality as the Government it now appeared as a «foreign» society, so that even those of its missionaries who were of Dutch origin could become suspect.

Under British rule, it had already become official policy to help the Hottentots in some way — though Vanderkemp, even while he was eager to help, realised the political motive predominated over the humanitarian. A beginning was made by the provision of land for a settlement, soon to be moved near to Algoa Bay. Under the Dutch Governor the institution was finally settled at Bethelsdorp. Certain missionaries were at the same engaged in evangelistic work in some distant areas, and that was in no way regarded as a secondary activity. But it is Bethelsdorp and the demand for justice which was closely connected with it which are here of the greatest significance.

(19) The «instructions», dated 26 Nov. 1798, are printed in the *Evangelical Magazine*, 1799, pp. 133ff. For the plans, see Vanderkemp to L.M.S. 13 May 1799 ; L.M.S. to Vanderkemp 15 Sept., 21 Oct. 1799 ; L.M.S. to S.A. Society, *Report* 1800, p. 10.

Bethelsdorp was very important for three reasons : it was a major part of the Society's work and was an attempt to carry out some of its chief aims ; it achieved much for the Hottentots ; and its existence and methods of work in practice exacerbated relations between the missionaries and many of the settlers, with the attitude of the Government and of officials varying according to circumstances. Its two bases could be described as religion and «civilisation». The former included not only religious «conversion» as commonly understood, but all the implications of a belief in the rights of men, of respect and justice. The civilising purpose was expressed by instruction in agriculture, cattle and sheep-farming, manufactures and industries and by improvements in housing, clothing and orderliness of life. Progress was made difficult by the poor quality of the land allotted by the Government and in some cases by the mentality of the people whom the institution was intended to protect and benefit. But the chief difficulty lay in the different conceptions of the aims of the institution held by the Government and by the Society. It soon became obvious that the official aim was very largely that of providing convenient labour for the settlers. In contrast, the aims of the Society, especially represented by Vanderkemp, was that the interests of the Hottentots should be paramount ; that they should not be forced but should be educated and persuaded to see for themselves that it would be in their interest to change some of their ways and take advantage of the special opportunities. Their concern for the Hottentots made the missionaries aware of some cases of what they regarded as unfair and even cruel treatment of the Hottentots by the settlers. In 1804 they brought some of these facts to the notice of the authorities.

In these circumstances it is not surprising that the aims, activities and atmosphere of Bethelsdorp aroused great hostility among the settlers. Whatever Bethelsdorp did was wrong : whether in failure or in success, reasons were found to denigrate it. The chief local Government official was also extremely hostile. There were accusations that Bethelsdorp was a state within the State. The outcome was that Vanderkemp and Read were called to Cape Town to discuss the situation with the authorities and were therefore absent from Bethelsdorp for the greater part of 1805. Some misunderstandings were cleared up and the prejudice of many of the accusations was revealed. But the missionaries were still detained at Cape Town. It came to seem unlikely even that they would ever return to Bethelsdorp. But there had been several new missionaries appointed ; they could be left to work in South Africa. The two leaders from Bethelsdorp began to formulate schemes for work elsewhere (20).

Plans for Madagascar

It was clear that the Directors, while still favouring the idea of a mission in Madagascar, were not prepared to depart from their policy that it should be

(20) Lovett *op. cit.*, 1, pp. 499-506 ; Martin *op. cit.*, pp. 117-69 ; Clinton *op. cit.*, pp. 34-60.

based on South Africa : it was not to be founded by missionaries sent from Britain for that purpose alone. Vanderkemp accepted the restrictions on proposals he might have otherwise made. Early in 1804 he explained what may be called his second plan, which outlined what had evidently been in his mind for the previous two or three years.

Vanderkemp continued to be convinced that the mission should be attempted : «We long to see a Mission established in Madagascar». The term «we» might refer to the whole group of missionaries, who might all favour the idea of a mission, while thinking that it would not be possible to realise it in the near future. But more probably it refers to Vanderkemp and Read, the latter being the only one at this time who was prepared to take explicit action to forward the plan. As the only help to be expected from the Directors was an increase in the number of missionaries in South Africa, which would in theory make it easier for some to move to Madagascar, Vanderkemp turned to his colleagues and also to the local Missionary Society, urging that «they should engage in the mission to Madagascar. He had done this «repeatedly» – but without success. The attitude of Vanderkemp's colleagues was not entirely unreasonable. Each missionary was engaged on the work allocated to him. Each evidently thought that there was no good reason, despite the enthusiasm of two of their number, to give up what seemed important work after so short a time and begin again in a different country. Neither Vanderkemp nor the missionaries as a group had absolute authority to direct a particular missionary to take such a step. There still remained the local Missionary Society out of which might have come one or two volunteers. But none appeared. Even so, Vanderkemp hoped that that Society would help in another very practical way ; they could arrange for a ship to call at Algoa Bay which would «take in two or three Missionaries from Bethelsdorp, whose hearts the Lord shall incline to give themselves to that service, and to deliver them in Madagascar or elsewhere» ; that is, either take them the whole way or, at least, to a port where other transport could be found. But even that suggestion seems to have met with no response.

But Vanderkemp was not daunted. There were two who were concerned to do something for Madagascar. Each would play an appropriate part. If none of his colleagues were able to go to Madagascar then, wrote Vanderkemp, «I should wish to supply their place». The only condition was that there must be a competent person to take charge of Bethelsdorp. That was the part to be played by Read : his contribution to the establishment of the mission would be his readiness to take over at Bethelsdorp and so enable Vanderkemp to go. Vanderkemp's decision in such circumstances was quite in character and it probably implied greater eagerness than the plainness of the words just quoted might suggest. On arrival at the Cape he had been challenged by its divided society. Madagascar would place him in a society which was not divided as was the Cape by the political, economic, strategic and religious interests of Europe. But it would still provide a new challenge on its own terms – while others continued to deal with the situation at the Cape. The decision marked

an important stage in Vanderkemp's thinking. Previously he seems to have regarded himself, despite the encouragement from the Directors that he should take a more personal part, as one who provided useful information and made plans. But now he became the candidate : he would see and act for himself. From that moment personal service of some kind in Madagascar, whether as a visitor evaluating the situation or as a resident missionary, became more and more prominent in his life and was still uppermost in his mind at the time of his death (21).

If any ship had been available, Vanderkemp would probably have sailed for Madagascar early in 1804. But none was ready. He remained in Africa – and there began that process of firm decisions and plans about Madagascar alternating with changes and withdrawals, caused either by external circumstances or by the perplexity, leading to vacillation, which he experienced from time to time for more personal reasons.

There is no explicit statement that it was the difficulties met in trying to start the mission in Madagascar which led to the resurrection of the idea mentioned at an early stage in the South Africa mission that mission might be started in other parts of Africa or elsewhere. But it may be noted that it was at that time that such ideas were being considered both in South Africa and in London. After only a few months Vanderkemp's second plan for Madagascar had been modified and placed in a new setting. Now he wrote that he and Read longed for the arrival of more colleagues to take over their work

that we may, if God opens the door, attempt a missionary excursion either into the more northern and entirely unknown parts of the continent, or to Madagascar, with a view however to return to our present station.

Read, then, was to go as well as Vanderkemp ; Madagascar was only one possible area ; and their journey, wherever they went, would only be exploratory. During the following year (1805) it was impossible to carry out any such plan, for they were called to Cape Town to explain the situation at Bethelsdorp. On the other hand, the fact that they were prohibited from returning to that station again turned their minds to other areas, especially as there was a risk that the prohibition might be turned into expulsion from the Cape.

It was in these circumstances that a third plan of a very much wider scope, covering both Madagascar and other areas, was proposed. There were three main proposals. First, Vanderkemp and Read said that, for themselves, their attention was «fixed on Madagascar and the coast of Mozambique». Second, «two sets each at least of five or six well chosen and resolved Missionaries»

(21) Vanderkemp to L.M.S. 29 Feb. 1804 (*Evang. Magazine* 1804, p. 475) ; Vanderkemp to L.M.S. 8 Dec. 1805, 10 July 1806 ; L.M.S. to Vanderkemp 26 Dec. 1805.

should be appointed to Africa, one party for the west coast, the other for the east. Third, the South African Society should be encouraged to engage in missionary work within the Colony. From these proposals, it is clear that Vanderkemp and Read hoped to go to Madagascar. It is not explicitly stated that they intended to remain there for an extended period. But the plan can be interpreted as meaning that such would be their intention if the proposals concerning other areas were not accepted. On the other hand if the proposals were approved :

and we may be in the mean time settled in Madagascar or Mozambique, we may easily by your ship, find an opportunity to join either the eastern or western proposed Africa Mission, and in the meantime correspondence be kept up with us in some measure by interventions of the Cape.

In the very same month (December 1805) when those proposals were sent from South Africa, the Directors in London themselves wrote to explain to the missionaries their ideas about work in other countries. They judged that South Africa was well-staffed. Read could assume heavy responsibility, so that it would be possible for Vanderkemp to «depart afar off to the Heathen to make known the Gospel dispensation to other regions also». They knew, they said, that Vanderkemp had been considering «the more northern parts of Africa and Madagascar ; and they desired that such plans might take effect» ; but first he was to consider China.

These references, whether by the missionaries or by the Directors, to other parts of the world implied a change in the status of the proposed mission in Madagascar. Hitherto, that island had been in practice the only distant mission for which definite proposals had been made beyond the bounds of South Africa, and the possibility of founding it was closely related to the fortunes of the South Africa mission. But in the light of these various other proposals, it became dependent on the fortunes of a variety of other wide-ranging schemes ; and so far as the Directors was concerned was now to take second place to China.

But if it was circumstances outside their control, namely, the prohibition on their working again at Bethelsdorp, which led to the grand proposals for missions in west and east Africa as well as Madagascar, it was again circumstances beyond their control which so changed the situation that their plans had to be shelved. Within little more than a month of the proposals being sent to London, the British were once again in control of the Cape. The new Governor gave permission for them to return to Bethelsdorp. They could take up again with hope what had long been their major work. There was no need for the Directors to reiterate their suggest on about Vanderkemp himself had second thoughts about undertaking work outside South Africa. Although he had already decided that Read could take charge of Bethelsdorp, a view also held by the Directors, Vanderkemp began to be concerned that most of his colleagues were young ; but there was a need for special wisdom and firm-

ness in the conduct of the mission. On that basis he wrote in July 1806 to say that he thought it his duty to remain (22).

The Madagascar mission was again deferred.

« *GIVE UP MADAGASCAR, I DARE NOT* » : 1806-1811

South Africa

The third phase was dominated by the renewal of British control, the effects of the abolition of the slave-trade, protests against injustice, the development of Bethelsdorp and the implications of Vanderkemp's remarriage.

The British regained control early in 1806 and evidently intended to be more active in making changes than previously when they had regarded themselves as only temporarily in charge. That was shown, for example, by the application to South Africa of the law of 1807 abolishing the slave-trade. It might have been expected that such a humanitarian act would have improved the situation of the slaves ; and to some extent it did, in that at least the trade and all that it implied was legally, even if not always in practice, destroyed. But paradoxically the new law tended to worsen the lot of many who were already slaves. Owners now thought it all the more necessary to force them to provide every possible benefit for their masters.

Vanderkemp and Read had already had much to say locally about individual acts of injustice against Africans. But the worsening conditions led Read to write even more forcefully about the state of affairs in a letter to London in August 1808. When extracts published by the Directors were read in South Africa, great anger was aroused, not only for the individual accusations implied but also for his general approach. After a meeting with local authorities in 1810, Vanderkemp and Read were invited to explain their views in person to the Governor. That they did in Cape Town in April 1811. The outcome was that the Governor undertook to set up an official enquiry into the allegations.

The return of the British had immediately enabled the missionaries to return to Bethelsdorp in 1806 and there make good progress. The missionary staff was also enlarged by the arrival at intervals of recruits sent from Europe. But the obvious sympathy with the African population (brought to a head in the allegations about injustice) not only caused resentment and opposition among many of the European civilians, but also made the Governor and his higher officials wary of the missionaries, despite the fact that the Missionary

(22) Vanderkemp to L.M.S. 8 Dec. 1805, 10 July 1806 ; L.M.S. to Vanderkemp 26 Dec. 1805.

Society was no longer to be regarded by the Government in control as being foreign (23).

A continual source of irritation to many was provided by Vanderkemp's manner of life, which he simplified to such an extent that he was regarded as having betrayed European culture and his own intellectual status. This reaction was greatly intensified by his remarriage. For a man to take a second wife after years of being on his own would seem to be a personal matter only. But the fact that his wife was not a European made the marriage important vis-a-vis the local European and African communities, though for opposite reasons ; and the fact that she was of Malagasy origin was significant in connection with the Madagascar project. In the middle of 1806 Vanderkemp wrote to the Directors :

You'll be surprised when I inform you that I am, after being a widower for fifteen years, remarried with a native of this country, whose mother is a native of Madagascar. I hope that in this step I Have consulted and followed the will of God, and that this alliance will not prove a stumbling-block to me in my missionary work ; my present wife being fully resolved to accompany me wherever it may please God to send us.

The willingness of Vanderkemp in the conditions of the time to take a wife from a non-European community - and he had already been preceded by Read, who had married a Hottentot wife - was a symbolic declaration of the missionaries' attitudes and aims. That declaration was further strengthened by being linked to the amelioration of the lot of the slaves and the purchase of their freedom when possible, as already proposed to the Directors a few years previously ; for Vanderkemp had to redeem both his wife and her immediate family, including her mother. But what, apart from its purely personal aspect, seemed to the missionaries to be a positive declaration, appeared to many to be a negative and wrong action which further incensed them against Bethelsdorp and its leaders (24).

Plans for Madagascar

Vanderkemp decided in the middle of 1806 that he would have to postpone his proposed visit to Madagascar, in view of the new situation brought about by the return of the British, especially the opportunity for him and Read to take up again their work at Bethelsdorp. But in that same year he committed himself to the Madagascar project in a new and especially powerful manner. He did this when he re-married.

(23) Lovett *op. cit.*, 1, pp. 170-95 ; Clinton *op. cit.*, pp. 60-83. Bethelsdorp Report, 1810, in *Transactions*, iii. p. 391.

(24) Vanderkemp to L.M.S. 10 July 1806. Some other L.M.S. missionaries also took wives of a different race, notably Read, who married in 1803 (Lovett *op. cit.*, 1, p. 503. There had been many mixed marriages in the previous 150 years. But the ambivalence of the attitude of those who criticised

It has already been noted how his marriage to one who was not a European like himself seems to have been in part a declaration of solidarity with the African people among whom he was working and how it became a source of further opposition on the part of others in the Colony. Insofar as such a basic conviction played a part in the marriage, it could have been demonstrated by taking a wife from among any of the oppressed groups. There is no reason to believe that he was marrying to make a declaration of sympathy and policy. But information about the more personal aspects of the matter is lacking. It is therefore impossible to say whether in fact he felt himself moved to make his choice within any one group rather than another. But the one whom he did marry was described as « a native of Madagascar ». It is possible that the Madagascar connection played some part, in view of his interest in the island. But just as his style of living, for which he was so severely criticised by his fellow-Europeans, was a partial identification with the people of the African continent and drew him closer to them, so it is clear that once he had taken a wife directly connected with Madagascar the link would intensify his interest in and his identification with its people. That was one important implication of the marriage. But there was another, which might prove to be less favourable. Hitherto in personal matters Vanderkemp had only himself to consider. Responsibility for a wife and for the four children whom they eventually had would not leave him as free to move as before. His wife had said that she would accompany him wherever he went. But she suffered from prolonged and sometimes serious illness and her condition added to his perplexity of mind at certain times (25).

For a couple of years Vanderkemp concentrated on Bethelsdorp. At the end of that period he was able to report on the great progress made and on the absence of « hostile invasions » :

The Institution has attained such a degree of solidarity that it may be committed to the care of another Missionary, which will enable me to proceed in the work of the Lord, and to devote some subsequent days of my advanced age to his service, among some other nation hitherto unacquainted with the way to everlasting happiness.

the L.M.S. missionaries (especially Vanderkemp) is shown by a quotation from *Kay Travels and Researches in Kafir-land* : (though some farmers had « taken native wives » ... « their deep-rooted prejudice against the latter still continued, inasmuch that Mr Vanderkemp's preaching rendered him contemptible in their eyes » (quoted in *Moffat Missionary Labours and Scenes in Southern Africa*, 1842, p. 30. Moffat himself thought that Vanderkemp had misjudged the situation having been induced to act « with more feeling than judgment » probably because of « his extreme sympathy with this enslaved people ». Moffat disapproved also of Vanderkemp's style of life ; for example, Vanderkemp « would dispense with hat, short and shoes, while the patron and advocate of civilization » and thought that « anomalies and shades of character added nothing to his usefulness », pp. 39-42).

(25) Even though Vanderkemp's wife was described as « a native of Madagascar », she was not a full blooded Malagasy, as her father appears to have been an African. Vanderkemp dealt with his difficulties in buying the freedom of his wife and her family in his letter to L.M.S. 30 Sept. 1807.

On the basis of confidence in the future of Bethelsdorp, a plan was drawn up in August 1808. Vanderkemp's exposition of it together with some remarks by Read show that it was worked out in consultation with colleagues to a degree which had apparently not been so evident before.

The plan was not entirely new ; rather did it broadly follow the pattern of that of 1805. There were two main aims : to build on existing work ; and to extend into new areas. The first choice for extension was within Africa itself. The missionaries should «make an excursion» travelling north-east along the east coast ; or alternatively travel north to the meridian of Algoa Bay. For such expeditions the permission of the Government would be required. If it were granted, the proposed extension would take place, for the immediate future, in Africa itself. On the other hand, «should the Governor decline our petition, we intend by the first opportunity to sail for Madagascar».

So far as Madagascar was concerned, this was Vanderkemp's third main plan. One precious hindrance to the Madagascar project had been overcome, for now some of his colleagues were willing to go with Vanderkemp. But Madagascar was still only part of a wider plan and the possibility of considering it depended on decisions about other sections which took precedence over it. The plan as a whole had to be submitted to two authorities. The Directors in London made no objection ; Read could be temporary superintendent of Bethelsdorp ; and two new missionaries were appointed to replace those who might leave with Vanderkemp.

The implication of the Directors' agreement was that extension should be in Africa ; and Madagascar would still take second place. But the Government took an entirely different line. After what seems to have been considerable delay, the response to the memorial which had been submitted took the form of an invitation to meet the «commissioner» Colonel Collins. The first point which Collins made clear was that Governor Caledon was against the proposed plans for extension in other areas in Africa. The second point was that Caledon was, on the other hand, very much in favour of Vanderkemp going to Madagascar and would even ask the British Admiral to help. Caledon obviously feared that the work of the missionaries might lead the people to acquire ideas and attitudes not favoured by the Government and others.

Against the background of that refusal it would have been open to Vanderkemp to conclude that the response was made because of the situation in Africa and that the offer of help concerning Madagascar was an attempt to dispose of him and probably of Read too. That his conclusion would have been correct is proved by Collins' own official report in which he stated that he had done

all in his power to dissuade Vanderkemp from thinking of renewing the Caffer mission by endeavouring to impress on his mind the importance of a mission to Madagascar (26).

(26) Vanderkemp to L.M.S. 30 Aug. 1808 (*Evang. Mag.* 1810, p. 27). 28 Jan. 1810. Philip *op. cit.*, 1, p. 26 ; Caledon to L.M.S. 20 June 1810. E.A. Walker

But even though from one point of view the Governor's motives were questionable it was still true that he had made an offer which might make possible the visit to Madagascar. In any case, Vanderkemp had decided that he could leave Bethelsdorp and if unable to go elsewhere in Africa, would carry out his project for Madagascar. Read reported on the specific decision which was taken and on his own reaction :

After some deliberation and prayer, my dear Brothers Van der Kemp and Ullbright resolved upon (the visit to Madagascar), and are actually taking measures for the accomplishment of this important undertaking. How I wish for the spread of Christ's Kingdom, and how I ought to rejoice at the expectation of that long neglected island being at last visited with the light of the Gospel. Yet the thought of my Brothers leaving Bethelsdorp, and on being separated, is to me a thick cloud, and an insurmountable trial.

Read could report that a decision had been taken. But the process of «deliberation» was much less easy than he implied. Despite the opportunity offered by Caledon, Vanderkemp was perplexed about what he should do. Thinking aloud on paper, he indicated the forces which pulled him in different directions. On the one hand, he was drawn to remaining in South Africa, for two reasons. He wanted to help Read, if that should be necessary ; but «in Madagascar I am quite out of his reach, and he left helpless !» Again, his own wife was not in good health ; she and the children would be very badly placed should he «die on the passage, or (which may be expected) in the Island». On the other hand, he was drawn to Madagascar. It had long been his desire ; and if he did not take the chance now offered it seemed unlikely that any other missionaries would be able to go in the foreseeable future.

Madagascar (already too long neglected) will be left without knowledge of the way of life, as there seems no probability that other Missionaries will be inclined to attempt a mission to the Island, which for more than ten years I have in vain expected and urged.

Amid these conflicting claims, Vanderkemp felt that the matter should be settled by an «investigation of God's will». He was not himself consciously to «deliberate on ... going to Madagascar, or remaining at Bethelsdorp, but to trust in the Lord». Following this course, he reached the point where he was able to say.

I have committed the direction of my choice to him and without being conscious of any emotion, *chosen to go to Madagascar*.

Perhaps it was the subtlety of his training which made him add :

I cannot say, that it will be his will, that I shall go to Madagascar, but I venture to say, that it will be his will that I shall *choose* to go to that Island.

in his *History of South Africa*, p. 140 remarks that Caledon was «autocratic» and that he had a «horror of things done in the name of liberty in revolutionary France». He seems to have thought that at the very least the work of the missionaries.

It was in this manner that early in 1810 Vanderkemp «chose» to go to Madagascar, and would be accompanied, it seems, by his wife and children. His missionary colleagues would be Ullbricht and his wife and Verhoogd, who replaced Smit. They might be joined by one of the two new missionaries then due to arrive and in the event Pacalt offered to go. Read, at least for the time being, was to remain at Bethelsdorp (27).

Prospects now seemed brighter. Vanderkemp would leave South Africa. He would go to Madagascar, not alone but with colleagues. All that remained was to obtain transport. This proved to be a problem far from easy to solve. Caledon had made his offer and it seemed at the time that it would be in the interest of the Government to dispose of Vanderkemp as soon as possible, to which end they might make every effort to find a vessel to take him away. But time passed ; the offer was not withdrawn ; yet now there appeared to be no great urgency after all to hasten his departure. Evidently tired of waiting, Vanderkemp tried to make private arrangements. If possible the party should leave from Algoa Bay, which was comparatively close to Bethelsdorp, whereas to take the whole party to Cape Town and there wait indefinitely for a ship would be very expensive. He therefore wrote to a friend at the Cape urging him to «look out for a vessel, whose master would be willing to convey (the missionaries) from Algoa Bay to Madagascar». At the same time he wrote to Caledon asking for permission for a private ship to call. The official reply was not encouraging. It was asserted that «no private vessels trade to Madagascar» and the only chance was, as had already been suggested, that there might be passages on a ship of the fleet. Such a ship, however, would probably not be allowed to call at Algoa Bay and passengers would have to board her at the Cape. The promise was renewed to send news «when the time arrives». But it began to seem that the time never would arrive. In January 1811, by which date Vanderkemp was sixty-three years of age, he indicated the new thought which had come to him as a result of the delay : «I now begin to fear, that this time will not arrive till after my death». Despairing of official help, he decided to use his own initiative again, this time by seeking help in London rather than at the Cape. He suggested to the Directors that they should try to find a «south whaler or other private vessel» bound for Africa, «whose master would be disposed to transport (the missionaries) from Algoa Bay to Madagascar». With reference to the Governor he simply said, significantly, that «men and opinions are changeable» — and went on to suggest that it would be advisable to obtain an «order» in London which would protect such a captain from Government opposition (28).

(27) Vanderkemp to L.M.S. 28 Jan. 1810 ; *Board Minutes* 23 July 1810 ; Read in *Transactions* iii, pp. 398-99.

(28) Verhoogd was a former slave named Maart who, because that name was locally regarded as degrading, took the name Andreas Verhoogd. He worked with Smit in a school. (*Transactions*, iii, p. 296). He was not an appointed «missionary» but a «helper» held in high regard. For the plans about Mada-

The year 1811 was in many ways the most difficult of all the years Vanderkemp spent in Africa and was indeed to be the last of his life. After the discussions with the Governor it seemed best not to return to Bethelsdorp at once but rather to wait for the arrival of a new Governor who was to replace Caledon. The two missionaries were still convinced of the truth of their allegations ; and there was a continuing concern for those on whose behalf they were protesting. There would be some delay before the official enquiry could be started. Feeling against the missionaries was running high and there seemed to be little sympathy to be found even in church circles in Cape Town. These circumstances inevitably affected anything to which Vanderkemp turned his attention, including the Madagascar project and tended to induce a condition of perplexity even after some decision had been taken. Further, he was not in good health, while at the same time having to deal with his family responsibilities.

So far as Madagascar was concerned, there were two matters of policy with which Vanderkemp had to deal, the first a suggestion from the Directors and the second a chance to give up South Africa as a base and to turn instead to Mauritius. All along the Directors regarded Vanderkemp as the missionary who was not senior only in years but also in authority. He, on the other hand, was reluctant to accept such a position as a matter of official status. But now the Directors took the idea further. They knew, they said, that Vanderkemp had «been at times seriously indisposed» ; further, the number of missionaries had increased. It would therefore be well if there were a Superintendent for the mission - and they were «inclined to require (his) valuable services» in that post. It was not a polite way of ordering him to take the post, for there was no change in their policy of relying on the judgment of Vanderkemp himself, as the man on the spot. They therefore said explicitly that it was left «to his judgment and inclination» to accept the post or «proceed, if he finds it practicable, to Madagascar». In his reply, Vanderkemp acceded in part to the Directors' suggestion, but at the same time he did so in a manner which should still allow him to go to Madagascar. He could himself, he said, take the title of «Superintendent», but he thought that Read should be given the post of «Inspector». The implication was that if he should leave there would still be someone in an official administrative position (29).

The second matter of policy concerned Mauritius. So far, all planning for Madagascar had been based on South Africa, from which a passage might be obtained to the island ; and the mission was envisaged as being founded on the west coast. But the capture of Mauritius by the British in 1810 entirely changed the situation. There was now another British base from which a passage

gascar, see Vanderkemp to L.M.S. 8 June 1810, including part of official reply to himself dated 24 April 1810 ; Read to L.M.S. 5 June 1810 ; *Report*, 1811, pp. 370-71.

(29) Vanderkemp to L.M.S. 1 Sept. 1811 ; Martin *op. cit.*, pp. 187-91.

might be obtained. Even though that would probably mean turning to the east coast instead of to the west, that was not of vital importance : it was still Madagascar. Whether or not the news of the capture of Mauritius had at once suggested this new strategy to Vanderkemp is not clear. But the idea was developed in the middle of 1811 when J. Thompson, an LMS missionary on the way to India, touched at the Cape. He expected to call also at Mauritius. Vanderkemp took the chance to send by him a brief letter to Farquhar, the Governor of Mauritius. This did not yet imply a change in strategy. Information would be needed before a new approach could be proposed ; and the long-standing plan to go to the west coast was still very much in mind. Soon after Cradock, the new Governor, arrived, a letter was sent to him asking him for the help over transport which had been promised by his predecessor.

Vanderkemp evidently did not keep his new-found interest in Mauritius to himself, for it immediately aroused extremely vigorous opposition. Supposed difficulties were added to other arguments against leaving South Africa. Unfortunately, the identity of the objectors and their qualifications to discuss Mauritius and the east coast of Madagascar are not clear. The objections, however, are reported quite unambiguously. To go via Mauritius without Government help in transport, it was said, would be an enormous expense to the Society. Then, even when the missionaries arrived in Mauritius (after incurring such expense) the Governor might well not permit them to go to Madagascar. The third point was intended to show the complete futility of the idea, for even if the missionaries did succeed in reaching Madagascar, they would probably be

constrained to reside at a certain determined spot under the eyes of a military detachment stationed near the shore without permission to proceed in the interior.

So apparently formidable objections were raised and cleverly attached to each stage of the journey between the Cape and the interior of Madagascar. The obvious reply would be that information from Mauritius would throw light on all these matters ; that there was no intention to set off without everything having been carefully considered ; and that therefore there was nothing to do but to wait for information, as had been requested (30).

The impression is given that the objectors were not so much concerned with the success or failure of the mission to Madagascar as with the chance which the idea of using Mauritius as a base gave them of mounting new arguments against Vanderkemp's expressed intention to leave South Africa. There was indeed a personal aspect to the matter and some concern for Vanderkemp's own welfare. His own friends objected that his bad health and his family circumstances would not permit the proposed undertaking. The question of health and family and the remark of a Director that the Madagascar

(30) Vanderkemp to Governor of Mauritius 28 August 1811. Thompson was appointed by the L.M.S. to India, which he reached in 1812.

mission would be an enterprise attended with danger had been considered by Vanderkemp. He was still prepared to go. But it was now, in 1811 in Cape Town, less easy to be sure, when the welfare of others not so personally related to him and that of the work of the whole mission was discussed. Not only had charges been brought against Bethelsdorp, to which a reply would have to be made. The missionaries themselves had brought to the notice of the Government «complaints, in which many persons were involved». To leave the country before the business had been investigated it was said would suggest the missionaries concerned were afraid of the outcome and that «others would be injured» (31).

In the face of this pressure, even though some of the arguments could be disposed of, Vanderkemp found that the perplexities of the previous year were coming back in a more complicated form. So far as Bethelsdorp was concerned he felt sure that Read would be able to deal with the «malignant misrepresentations» of the institution and their «pernicious tendency». But on the bigger issue of the «complaints» made against cases of injustice—some made by himself and some by Read with his approval - he realised that he had to face squarely the question as to whether or not he was really being «called» to undertake other work, however useful, in another country when it would mean leaving Read to prove the case and deal with those so virulently opposed to the missionaries. In a letter he indicated his uncertainty in the face of the conflicting claims :

I am still in the same state of perplexity as before, respecting what is my duty to do ; but God, I trust, will give direction ; my prayer is that he would preserve me from taking a wrong step. The Cape is unpleasant to me ; — to go to England, and so give up Madagascar, I dare not ; - for if I do not go thither, who will ?

Vanderkemp decided that he would find the «direction» which he sought in an objective event. Ullbricht, on account of bad health, could no longer offer to be a colleague in Madagascar ; but Pacalt «was as ready to it as ever». Despite that assertion there was always some uncertainty even about decisions which had been clearly taken. The test then would be that «if Brother Pacalt should be determined to go on» and demonstrated that determination by coming from Bethelsdorp to Cape Town, his arrival would be regarded as proof that Vanderkemp was indeed called» to leave Read and the problems in South Africa and go instead to Madagascar. It might seem that by acting in this way Vanderkemp was fleeing from the responsibility of making a straightforward decision himself. But the clue to the situation is to be found in the fact that from Vanderkemp's point of view Pacalt was also involved in «the will of God» in relation to the work of missionaries in South Africa and Madagascar in the special circumstances of the time. Pacalt's continued determination to go would be regarded as a «sign» providing the «direction» for which Van-

(31) Read in *Transactions*, iii. p. 405.

derkemp was looking ; a change of attitude on Pacalt's part would be no less a sign, though the consequences would be very different.

The last day of October 1811 proved to be significant for the prospects of the Madagascar project. First, Pacalt arrived. Vanderkemp reported that he was «fully determined to proceed with me by the first opportunity». The question whether to stay or to go was settled : Vanderkemp would go. Second, an official reply was received to the request sent a fortnight before. Bird, the Colonial Secretary, wrote that the Governor «will forward your views and those of your associates in proceeding to Madagascar by such means as may be in his power». There was no ship yet available – but at least an assurance was given. Third, there was a letter from Thompson reporting that Governor Farquhar's Secretary had said that the Governor «was very desirous that a Mission should be established in Madagascar ; and would not only give a free passage to the island, but presents for the Chiefs». Before long Thompson wrote again. He hoped there would be success for the idea of going to Madagascar via Mauritius, though he thought it would be advisable perhaps if Vanderkemp were to remain in Africa at least until more should be known about the attitude of the new Governor. However, if Vanderkemp were to decide to sail for Mauritius, he should wait another two or three months till after the «Hurricane season» during which period there were no ships going to Madagascar (32).

At the end of November the outlook seemed as favourable as it ever would be. Vanderkemp and any colleague going with him would only have make a first move to Mauritius and, then, with free transport provided, move on to Madagascar. The first LMS missionaries to Madagascar would arrive there very probably in the middle of 1812, and begin work somewhere on the east coast, Tamatave being the most likely choice. But it was just at this time that Vanderkemp's state of health took a sudden turn for the worse. He seems to have had a series of strokes which led to partial paralysis of one leg. On the fifteenth of December 1811, he died (33).

Vanderkemp's death did not lead to the abandonment of the Madagascar project, but it marked the end of the first period of preparation. Among other matters in that period which could be selected for comment, three may be noted.

First, it is significant that the original proposal did not come from the Directors or from others holding an official position within the Society. It did not even come from an ordained minister. The suggestion was made by a layman, as a result of the conjunction of three sets of circumstances : that layman's Christian belief and view of the world ; his personal contact with a particular community on the coast of Madagascar ; and the proposal to found

(32) Read to L.M.S. 9 Jan. 1812 ; Thompson to Vanderkemp 2 Nov. 1811.

(33) Read *ibid.* ; Mrs Smit in *Transactions*, iii. pp. 409-10. Read had left Cape Town on 21 November 1811 and was therefore not present during the last three weeks of Vanderkemp's life.

a Missionary Society with a special structure and atmosphere which, though not strictly Anglican, were nevertheless congenial to the Anglican layman. A close parallel to the attitude and actions of Burn is to be found in the experience of George Buchan, another layman who, on being shipwrecked on the west coast, had personal contact with Malagasy ; retained an interest in them ; and later proposed that a mission be started among them (34).

Second, the most prominent figure was undoubtedly Vanderkemp. It is not necessary to attempt here any detailed assessment of the whole range of his missionary activities. But as a background to his concern for Madagascar it is interesting to note some of the comments which have been made about him — for this is the man who, had he achieved his ambition, would have become a missionary in Madagascar, with what might have been important consequences. After he had left for Africa, the Directors wrote that

his literary attainments, devotedness to the work, great sagacity, and acquaintance with the Dutch and other languages, render him peculiarly fitted for the post he now occupies.

In the biographical booklet published a few months after his death, they said that

Few men of such talents, learning and prospects have volunteered their services to the heathen... (35)

Thirty years later Moffat, one of his successors, wrote of him that he «was the friend of civil liberty». Other tributes have been paid in the twentieth century :

{He} did nothing by halves... a man of rare courage and disinterestedness... He was indeed one of the most learned, unselfish and original men on the Colony in his day... Perhaps he was too original for a land whose heart does not warm to singularity, and was too often a giant among pigmies to be popular or even understood.

His character was many-faceted as a diamond, and like a diamond sharp and clear (36).

Those who wrote such complimentary remarks did not turn a blind eye to Vanderkemp's faults. But they recognised the dominant position he held in his day — a position which, because of his ideas and determination, was regarded as a menace by others in South Africa, and which has led to some less than appreciative estimates of his place in the history of the country.

(34) Buchan was a passenger in the *Winterton* which was wrecked in 1792 ; later he proposed that a mission should be started on the west coast in addition to what was by that time being achieved in Imerina and made a donation to forward it.

(35) *Report*, 1799, p. 94 ; *Memoir*, p. 35.

(36) Moffat *Missionary Labours*, p. 40 ; Shepherd R.H.W. *Lovedale South Africa* (1941), pp. 3,11 ; Reason J. «Dr Vanderkemp», in *Christian World*, 6 Nov. 1947.

Vanderkemp was therefore also the dominant figure in connection with the proposed mission to Madagascar. Three points may be mentioned. First, his personal interest went far beyond what was strictly required by the obligation officially laid on him by the Directors. His main work was in South Africa, especially at Bethelsdorp and in connection with the welfare of the Hottentots. But he evidently developed an intense desire not only to see a mission founded in Madagascar, but also to take a direct part in it himself. This intensity of interest was recognised at the time. For example, the Directors wrote that

Madagascar was the place on which his heart had been fixed almost from the commencement of his missionary labours. He often mentioned this great island in his letters.

Moffat wrote that

He had long contemplated a mission to Madagascar, and though now far advanced in years, his heart burned with youthful ardour to enter on that perilous undertaking.

Another writer, referring to Madagascar and Vanderkemp's thoughts before his death, said that

(That) populous and long neglected island floated before his fancy continually ; he could think of nothing else day or night (37).

The point is that Vanderkemp was one of those early missionaries who developed an intense concern about missionary work in Madagascar not, as would be expected, after personal contact but *before* such contact had been made. As Burn was followed by Buchan, so in this respect Vanderkemp was followed a few years later by two others who developed a similar desire to work as missionaries in Madagascar (38). Further, this interest was translated into formal planning, in accordance with the original instructions given by the Directors and encouraged by them in correspondence, the plans being revised from time to time as required by changing circumstances. The Directors would probably not have put aside their early hopes, but they might have come to pay less attention to it if it had not been for Vanderkemp : he continually kept the subject before their eyes. It followed naturally that when after his death the Directors sent a special representative to South Africa, he renewed enquiries into the possibilities of a mission in Madagascar.

Third, the Madagascar project as planned by the Directors and in the conditions in which attempts were made to carry it out, is not unexpectedly an example of the interaction of various factors. In that connection two points may be mentioned. First, as a comparatively minor plan alongside much bigger schemes involving larger areas and very much larger populations, it falls within

(37) *Memoir*, p. 29 ; *Moffat Labours*, p. 39 ; *Carne J. Lives of Eminent Missionaries* (1832), ii. p. 100.

(38) Hooper was in Mauritius and eventually worked with the L.M.S. in South Africa. Threlfall was a Methodist missionary who was killed by a guide in South Africa while waiting to cross to Madagascar.

one phase of the overseas expansion period of European history. In any community adopting an expansionist policy a variety of factors, possibly including, for example, economic, political or military interests, are to be found. Religion as part of the total life of an expanding community may therefore play some part, whether major or minor, as may be seen not only in the comparatively recent European culture, but previously in some earlier movements such as those of the Moslem Arabs or various groups entering India. The balance of factors involved varies in each case and therefore, an attempt may be made to assess the relative importance of various factors and also of their interaction. So far as the Madagascar project in its original conception and throughout the Vanderkemp period is concerned, political or other interests relating directly to Madagascar which might have been important to some others were minimal. Against a background of the Directors' «view of the world» in cultural terms, the central motive was «religious» – which term, of course, connotes their understanding of the Christian faith and of the question of universal «truth».

But second, even though the main factor was religious, political and other factors did exert some influence in connections with attempts to carry out the project from the base in South Africa. On the one hand, such factors could be a hindrance : for example, when official and public reaction to the missionaries' demand for just treatment of the non-European peoples compelled them to remain in South Africa instead of moving to other areas, among which Madagascar was a priority. The hindrance experienced might have been less if a more restrained and more precise method of putting the case had been adopted. But no degree of tact or care would have entirely eliminated the strongly-felt reaction to proposals which ran counter to the interests of so many in the country. On the other hand, the very strength of the reaction could at times itself be a help. This was so when, under the Dutch, Vanderkemp could not return to Bethelsdorp and might have left the country ; and again under British rule when, evidently with the hope of disposing of Vanderkemp and some others and so freeing South Africa from their accusing and disturbing presence, the Governor offered to arrange transport for them to go to Madagascar. A final example of the helpful influence of certain political and related factors, was the capture of Mauritius. In this period it was only of minimal importance. But it pointed to another way by which Madagascar could be approached and which would have to be considered.

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