CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

INDIAN OCEAN

Under this title we will survey Spiritan activities in Reunion, Mauritius, Madagascar and adjacent islands, and then turn our attention to the French enclaves of Pondicherry and Chandernagor in India.

1. REUNION


Vincentian priests appear to have been the first Catholic missionaries to undertake regular work in the island of Reunion.1 They arrived as early as 1665 and by 1711 their labor had produced such significant results that the Holy See created a Prefecture there and put them in charge of it.

In Reunion, as elsewhere, the French Revolution tore asunder the fabric of religious progress. As missionaries died, no one came to fill the vacancies they left behind them. By 1814 less than half a dozen old and sick priests constituted the entire remaining clergy. It was at this juncture that the Holy Ghost Fathers took charge of the mission and from then on, the pattern of its subsequent history is very similar to that of the other old French colonies. Therefore, it may be divided for convenient treatment into the usual three periods.

a. The Prefecture: 1815-1851

Ap.H. 420

This first period was one of reconstruction and restoration during which the ravages of the Revolution were diagnosed and remedied. As a matter of fact, Reunion had suffered less from persecution than did the other colonies. Throughout those years of political and social turmoil, the Church continued to function as usual. Its greatest problem lay in the fact that reinforcements could not be sent to keep the ranks of the clergy up to full strength.

During the first half of the nineteenth century, Reunion follows the routine of tension and conflict which seems to have been

1We will refer consistently to this island as Reunion, although at different periods political events gave it successively the names of Mascareigne, Bourbon, Reunion, Bonaparte, Bourbon, and Reunion once again.

418
characteristic of all French colonies at that time. Repeated reference to these altercations should not, however, lead one to think that all the priests of this period were quick to anger and slow to work. Rather, the unremitting toil of the great majority provides the historian with precious little matter for comment. Such dedication and industry is what one expects of a life consecrated to God. It is only when a man departs notably from the accepted pattern that he affects the course of history for good or ill and thereby draws attention to himself and his deeds. Moreover, it must be borne in mind that these century-old clashes took place in another era when priests were few and Canon Law was not yet codified, when contact with Paris and Rome went through primitive channels, and when the State still gripped the Church in a vice-like stranglehold of annoying interference. In the ill-defined relationships of such an atmosphere, perplexing and difficult situations were bound to arise.

In 1817 the Spiritan Superior General managed to send a party of five priests to the rescue of the veteran missionaries who were valiantly struggling to keep the Faith alive in this distant outpost. The next year he found it possible to add a Prefect Apostolic in the person of Father Pasquiet, a priest who after many years of work in the United States had returned to France to spend his declining years in well-deserved retirement. Realizing the desperate condition of Reunion, this old man generously consented to dedicate his declining years to the religious welfare of the island.

Oddly enough, the tropical heat must have had a most adverse effect on the constitution of the venerable patriarch. He began almost immediately to show unmistakable signs of mental derangement and died rather tragically in 1818.

When illness forced his successor to return to France and thus end a quiet and fruitful regime of eight years' duration, Father Collin, a highly respected old man of more than seventy years took over as Vice Prefect (1829). Before long, he found himself involved in a violent quarrel with the Governor, a pitched battle which has remained famous ever since as a horrible example of the extent to which the State assumed control over the Church. On the basis of mere personal animosity, the Governor asked the Vice Prefect to transfer certain priests to other parishes. When Father Collin refused to concur for reasons...
of conscience, the gubernatorial office simply ordered the priests to pack their belongings and report to their new assignments. Refusing to capitulate, Father Collin withdrew their faculties and thereby made it impossible for them to function in these parishes. Whereupon the Governor suspended their salaries and shouted his now famous words: "I am the Bishop here." Ultimately, the case had to be settled through the intervention of the Spiritan Superior General and the Colonial Minister.

Schism. In 1829, Father Henry de Solages became the new Prefect. He was a man of great apostolic vision (or must we say dreams?) and some day he may even be canonized as a martyr. Nevertheless, he lacked that prudence without which wise government is impossible. In the less than two years he spent in Reunion prior to his departure for Madagascar (where he was to die for his Faith), he managed to become so intolerable that the Spiritan General begged the Holy See to make him resign lest he be sent home under military guard. The Prefect's trouble seems to have stemmed from his self-assigned role as the great reformer. In one fell swoop he set out to abolish everything that appeared even remotely irregular.

The first victim of his ill-considered zeal was Father Collin, whose rectory was shared by a sister-in-law and her daughter. These two very respectable ladies took care of the seventy-seven year old priest in most acceptable fashion. Nevertheless, soon after his arrival, de Solages peremptorily ordered Father Collin to turn his housekeepers out of the house because cohabitation was against the laws of the Church. Although the old man obeyed the heartless command, he complained bitterly about it and won everybody's sympathy. As a result, public anger mounted against the Prefect.

Shortly after, de Solages decided to settle in a truly authoritative way a minor dispute between a pastor and his curate. It seems that the pastor was right and the assistant wrong, but the Prefect did not see it that way. The pastor, however, was a stubborn old man who refused to give in. He appealed to the Governor, the Minister of the Colonies, and the Pope. When the furious Prefect interdicted him, the pastor brushed aside the sentence on the grounds that he had already appealed to higher authorities. He simply went about his duties as if nothing had happened. De Solages was so generally unpopular that the pastor soon had
Indian Ocean

quite a following. The whole thing promptly developed into a schism that lasted until the Prefect left for Madagascar. Before departing, he appointed the saintly Father Dalmond as his substitute. This Vice Prefect reinstated the recalcitrant pastor and then quietly brought things back to normal.

But only for a while. Another schism threatened. Since de Solages resented the Congregation’s remote control over the colonies, he did not notify the Spiritan Motherhouse of Father Dalmond’s appointment and his subsequent recognition by the Governor. As a result, the Superior General named a successor ad interim in the person of Father Goudot. When this priest arrived from France soon after, the island suddenly found itself with two legitimate but competing ecclesiastical superiors! Fortunately, the issue was settled before serious consequences developed, and Father Goudot returned to France.

In 1842 under the administration of Monsignor Poncelet, Father Libermann sent his first priests to prepare the slaves for their impending liberation. Since the story of their early work has been told in Chapter VI, it need not be repeated here.

b. The Secular Hierarchy: 1851-1919

After the establishment of the hierarchy in the old colonies, Reunion enjoyed a quarter-century of peace and harmony during the successive episcopates of Bishop Julian Desprez, the future Cardinal Archbishop of Toulouse; the scholarly Bishop Maupoint; and finally, Bishop Delannoy. The first two especially were very zealous and capable prelates for whom no amount of personal discomfort justified leaving good work undone. It was Bishop Maupoint, as has been noted in Chapter VIII, who gave the first impetus to the Catholic missions of Africa’s east coast.

In 1876, Gambetta’s radical politicians espoused the nomination of Father Dominic Soulé and eventually succeeded in having their candidate become Bishop of Reunion. Nothing could have been more regrettable. Although Bishop Soulé lasted only four years before he was forced to resign, he managed to wreck the diocese quite thoroughly. The senior Vicar General was the first to feel the impact of his tornado-like wrath. After dismissing this greatly beloved old priest just before he would have qualified for a pension, Soulé appointed him in rapid succession to a number of parishes and finally forbade him to do any ministry at all. Next,
he drove the Spiritans from the diocesan college which they had successfully restored after the Jesuits had been expelled some years earlier. Responsibility for this highly-respected school was then thrust on the second Vicar General and, when that startled and confused cleric failed to make an immediate go of it, he shared the fate of his senior colleague. Building up steam as he went along, Soulé next attacked his pastors, reducing them wholesale to the rank of assistants. Junior priests were quickly catapulted into pastorates and then downgraded again overnight. The Jesuits, the Christian Brothers, the various Sisters' Congregations, and a number of prominent Catholic laymen all came in for their share of his fiery blasts.

As could be expected, the victims of this tyranny—and that meant nearly everyone—did not react passively. Complaints piled up in Paris and in Rome. Finally, with the assistance of the two former Bishops of Reunion who had been transferred to metropolitan dioceses in France, and with the collaboration of all interested parties except the troublesome prelate himself, the Spiritan Superior General drew up a report which he submitted to the Holy See and the Government. Needless to say, both Church and State forced Bishop Soulé to resign at once.

During the brief vacancy after his resignation, Soulé's Vicar General (who was widely regarded as his evil genius) quickly shut down the local Jesuit chapel. Then, when Father Adam, a local Superior of the Holy Ghost Fathers in Reunion, came to the defense of the Society of Jesus, he was exiled from the diocese for his trouble.

Bishop Coldefy took charge in 1880 and energetically set about restoring peace. Unfortunately, he lasted only seven years before death took him away. The regime of his successor, Bishop Fuzet, was marked by so many conflicts with priests and laity that the Papel Nuncio called him another Soulé. The Jesuits especially seem to have drawn the thunderbolts of his ire, despite the fact that he innocently protested: "I really like the Jesuits . . . but in their place!" At last, after a running battle of four years' duration his transfer to a diocese in France cleared the air once again.

The next bishop of Reunion lasted twenty-seven years without getting into trouble with anyone. And for a most peculiar reason. Apparently he was so appalled at the preceding years of strife that he left the administration of his diocese completely in the
hands of his Vicar Generals and timorously withdrew to his summer villa outside the capital, emerging from it only three times a year for solemn pontifical services in his Cathedral. The entire Spiritan archives of the diocese during his term of office contain only three letters signed by him—one every nine years. Such a thoroughgoing withdrawal from active government was an effective way to avoid trouble, one must admit, but it is hardly what would be hoped from a bishop whose episcopate endured from 1893 to 1919, a period that brought on an intensification of persecution, the separation of Church and State, and the devastation of World War I.

**Spiritan Works.** After the abolition of slavery and the Christianization of its former victims, the Holy Ghost Fathers gradually channeled their endeavors toward regular parish work, social service, and the direction of educational institutions. Little need be said regarding their parochial activity, for it follows the usual pattern. It was in the field of social work that their greatest success was scored. By 1858, the government was so impressed that it induced the Spiritans to take over Providence Institute, a giant

enterprise that embraced, in addition to a hospital and a geriatric center, a juvenile detention home, a technical school, an agricultural school, and orphanages for boys and girls. The transformation of these tender victims of social disorganization into industrious youngsters of high moral standing caused widespread amazement. Very soon, the Institute's prosperity gave rise to that sort of admiration which ultimately degenerates into envy. The technical school in particular was soon faced with many enemies because the shoddy work of highly-paid "master-craftsmen" showed up very poorly against the superb products turned out by technical apprentices who had the benefit of careful training under expert Spiritan Brothers.

The Institute’s tragic end came in 1868. A rioting mob, having plundered the Jesuit College, rushed to attack Providence and its more than six hundred inhabitants. Although French Marines hurried to the scene and were able to beat back the marauders, tension mounted until a state of siege was proclaimed on the island. When a shortage of troops forced the Governor to withdraw his protective guard from the Institute, the Fathers feared for the safety of their charges and under cover of darkness retreated into the mountains. Meanwhile, the cowed Governor and his council made concession after concession to the leaders of the insurrection. In the end he agreed to the expulsion of the Jesuits and the suppression and confiscation of Providence Institute, allowing it to continue only as an old-age home and an orphanage with a maximum of twenty boys. In making these concessions, the Governor overlooked the fact that he was breaking the colony’s solemn twenty-five year contract with the Congregation and that he had arbitrarily confiscated a property to which the Spiritans held legal title. When the colony refused to honor its contract and return the stolen estate, the Congregation sued Reunion in the National Superior Court. Although the Spiritans won the case, they were unable to reopen the once-flourishing institute which in a few short years had done so much good for the poor and destitute.

In addition to Providence Institute, the Spiritans had charge of a leper colony and, after the Jesuits’ withdrawal, they also staffed the diocesan college. Soon after they took over in 1874, so many students transferred from the State College that there was bitter outcry against them in anticlerical circles. This time, however, it did not take a riot to crush the work. Bishop Soulé
arrived in the colony and immediately embarked on a program of obstructionism. Less than a year later, he closed the college entirely and thus left his diocese without a single Catholic center of higher education.

c. SPIRITAN HIERARCHY: 1919 TO THE PRESENT

When the Holy See decided in 1912 that Reunion's bishops should henceforth be drawn from the Holy Ghost Congregation, Father de Beaumont was named Coadjutor to the incumbent prelate (1917). Two years later, he succeeded him as the island's bishop. At his death in 1934 his confrere, Francis de Langavant, replaced him. Once again, two Spiritans have thus far sufficed to staff a diocesan see for a forty-year period. This remarkable stability has been followed in Reunion by the same happy results we described in Martinique and Guadeloupe: serious conflicts no longer occur; administrative policy is consistent; and native Creole vocations have increased to such an extent that now the local priests are more than twice as numerous as the secular clergy from France.

The flourishing condition of this diocese is evident to anyone who examines its latest statistics: less than eight thousand out of its population of 283,000 are non-Catholics; four hundred Creole Sisters and Brothers labor there; and nearly forty priests can point to it as their place of birth.

Aside from the Congregation's responsibility for about twenty-five parishes and other works, its priests are once again engaged in educating future priests and lay-leaders in the restored Seminary-College of Cilaos.

LIST OF ECClesiastical and Religious Superiors of Reunion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prefects Apostolic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fr. Alexis Collin, 1815-1818</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Vice Prefect)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fr. Pasquiet, 1818-1820</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fr. Alexis Collin, 1820-1821</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Vice Prefect)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fr. John Pastre, 1821-1828</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fr. Alexis Collin, 1828-1831
   (Vice Prefect)
Fr. Henry de Solages, 1831-1832
Fr. Peter Dalmond, 1832-1835
   (Vice Prefect)
[Fr. Goudot, 1832 Vice Prefect]
Msgr. Poncelet, 1835-1850
Fr. John Gueret, 1850-1851
   (Vice Prefect)

1851: Creation of the Hierarchy

Bishop Julian Desprez, 1851-1857

Bishop Armand Maupoint, 1857-1871

Bishop Victor Delannoy, 1872-1876
Bishop Dominic Soulé, 1876-1880
Bishop Joseph Coldefy, 1880-1887
Bishop Edmund Fuzet, 1887-1893
Bishop James Fabre, 1893-1919
Bishop George de la Bonminière de Beaumont, C.S.Sp., 1919-1934 (Coadjutor since 1917)
Bishop Francis de Langavant, C.S.Sp., 1934-

Fr. Frederic Le Vavasseur (1842-1848 C.S.C.M.) 1848-1850
Fr. Marcellin Collin, 1850-1854
Fr. Jerome Schwindenhammer, 1854-1855
Fr. Francis Duboin, 1855-1859
Fr. Marcellin Collin, 1859-1862
Fr. Francis Duboin, 1862-1867
Fr. Bartholomew Stoffel, 1867-1870
Fr. Francis Duboin, 1870-1872
   (later Vicar Apostolic of Senegal)
Fr. Bartholomew Stoffel, 1872-1874
Fr. Francis Corbet, 1874-1879
   (later Vicar Apostolic of Diego Suarez)
Fr. Bartholomew Stoffel, 1879-1889
Fr. Casimir Colrat, 1889-1897
Fr. Eugene Meillorat, 1898-1913
Fr. Amadeus Chardin, 1913-1919
Fr. Peter Gourtay, 1919-1933
   (later Vicar Apostolic of French Guiana)
Fr. Francis Monnier, 1932-1938
Fr. John Bolatre, 1938-1950
Fr. Peter Altmayer, 1950-1956
Fr. Louis Le Chevalier, 1956-
2. MAURITIUS

Introduction. The island derives its name from Dutch colonists who landed in the sixteenth century and decided to honor their Stadhouder Maurice of Nassau. When they abandoned their attempt at colonization in 1710, the French took over and called it Isle de France. The British captured it from them in 1810 and restored its original Dutch name.

Although Mauritius is only seven hundred and twenty square miles, it has a population of more than half a million. Its multi-racial inhabitants descend from Europeans, Africans, Indians and Chinese. In their religious affiliation, about thirty-five percent are Catholic, one and one-half percent Protestant, fifteen percent Mohammedan, and the remainder belong to various Asiatic cults.

In 1818 the jurisdiction of the Ecclesiastical Superior residing in Port-Louis extended from South Africa to Australia. Subsequent divisions have reduced his territory to the islands of Mauritius, Rodriguez, and seven archipelagos as far away as the Chagos islands.

Father Laval. Libermann's priests entered upon the scene in 1841 when Bishop Collier, O.S.B., took the Holy Heart congregation under his wing and obtained Father Laval as his first missionary. Chapter VI recorded how this saintly priest became the great apostle of Mauritius and converted sixty thousand liberated slaves. Gradually, as the new converts developed into established Christians, the Spiritans founded new parishes and took part extensively in the regular ministry of the diocese.

St. Louis College. In 1868 the Holy Ghost Fathers finally accepted the pressing invitation of Bishop Hankinson, O.S.B., to found a college in the capital of the island. They had hesitated a long time for, although the Jesuits had tried some years earlier and failed, they did not definitely abandon the idea of making another attempt till 1868. One of the reasons why the Jesuits decided not to resume their efforts was the prelate's strange and persistent refusal to grant the Fathers faculties to hear even their own students' confessions.

The very beginning of the Spiritan College was difficult, for it had to face stiff competition from the Royal Anglican College, which was wholly financed by the British Government, and from several private schools that were run for the benefit of their com-
commercial owners. In addition, the Holy Ghost Fathers were not free to direct the institution as they liked nor did the Bishop give any of the promised financial support to this purely diocesan college. Finally, he once again followed his old practice of refusing teaching priests faculties for hearing confessions.

Although in 1872, his successor Bishop Scarisbrick made an arrangement with the Congregation in virtue of which the Spiritans became owners of the College and could operate it at their own expense and in accord with their own views, he also stubbornly withheld faculties from the teaching staff. Nevertheless, working with a free hand, they now proceeded to develop the College into a strong and reputable institution.

Gradually, the competing schools disappeared for lack of students, except of course, the government-owned Royal College. As the enrollment increased, imposing buildings arose on the campus and everything pointed to a happy and stable academic future. There was even serious question of opening an extension center in the country.

Oddly enough, the College came to a dramatic end soon after the new structures were finished. The government instituted a new policy whereby it became necessary to follow the British educational system. If the Spiritan College were to compete successfully with the Royal College, the Congregation would have been forced to replace a large part of its staff with English-speaking priests. Because at that time its personnel commitments for other colleges in British territories made it impossible for the Irish Province to man another academic institution, the Motherhouse regretfully notified the Bishop of its decision to close St. Louis College.

Although the correspondence exchanged on this occasion between the prelate and the Spiritan Superior General does not mention it, the decision was at least partially influenced by the Bishop's systematic refusal to let the Fathers function as confessors even for their own students. Intransigence on this point years earlier had forced the Jesuits to close their College in disgust, and other instances of the same attitude had led the Vincentians to abandon Mauritius altogether the year before the Spiritans decided to go. The English personnel problem was, of course, the basic factor behind the decision to withdraw, for otherwise the Congregation would not have engaged in an expansion program just before closing the College entirely, but the
lack of jurisdiction in the confessional was certainly a contributing cause. As usual, heavy pressure was brought to bear on the Spiritans to make them stay, but the problem of man-power could not be solved. When all efforts to find a staff had failed, Bishop Scarisbrick sadly wrote: “In humble submission to Providence we will wait for the time when our Catholic College can be revived.”

More than forty years were to pass before the Congregation was able to provide a substitute for it by opening a Seminary-College at Quatres Bornes. After overcoming the initial difficulties inherent in such a work, the Fathers have brought this new educational unit to a flourishing condition.

Parishes. For over a century the Holy Ghost Fathers have participated in parochial work throughout the island. Their share in this ministry increased still more in 1916, when the Holy See assimilated Mauritius with the old French colonies and made the Congregation fully responsible for its religious welfare.
General Condition of the Diocese. Since the first Spiritan Bishop was named for Mauritius, three Holy Ghost Fathers have occupied its episcopal see. In general, the work of the clergy has been blessed with consoling results. The descendants of former slaves are strongly attached to the Church and have resisted all efforts of Protestant missionaries to proselytize them. Undoubtedly, saintly Father Laval continues to exercise his salutary influence on the island. Catholics, Mohammedans and Hindus alike visit his shrine in massive numbers. In 1957, on the anniversary date of his death, no less than 45,000 people went to pray at his grave.

The intensity of the island’s religious life reveals itself clearly in the latest statistics of the diocese: despite the fact that there is only one priest for every three thousand Catholics, reception of the Holy Eucharist averages fifteen times a year for each practicing Catholic; confraternities, third orders and pious associations flourish; best of all, native vocations to the priesthood and the religious life have now passed the three hundred mark. A well-organized Catholic educational system numbers seventy-five primary and secondary schools staffed by Brothers, Sisters, and approximately seven hundred and fifty devoted lay teachers. On the other hand, there is still a large group of about two hundred and fifty thousand Indians of whom only a small part thus far have been converted.

Rodrigues and the Archipelagos. The island of Rodrigues, which is situated in the Indian Ocean about three hundred and fifty miles east of Mauritius, had been visited only once by a Catholic priest before Father Laval decided to undertake its evangelization. In 1849 he sent Father Thévaux, one of the survivors of Libermann’s Australian venture, to see what he could do. As one can easily imagine, the moral conditions he found were downright shocking. Moreover, a local war was on the point of breaking out between the natives. Even against such odds, the intrepid missionary’s hard work was blessed with unexpected success: within six months he managed to bring about the conversion of the entire population, except for half a dozen obdurate old sinners. At the end of the nineteenth century the Spiritans established a permanent residence on the island to serve the increasing population. At present, three Holy Ghost Fathers are stationed there to take care of about thirteen thousand exceptionally fervent Catholics.
The seven archipelagoes of Chagos, Diego-Garcia, St. Brandon, Six Islands, Salomon, Aguleja and Farguhas are inhabited by some three thousand Catholics and have no resident priest. They are visited only from time to time.

**Ecclesiastical and Religious Superiors of Mauritius**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>James Laval, 1847-1859 (C.S.C.M. till 1848)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francis Thévaux, 1859-1872 (Marcellin Collin, 1859-1862, Official Visitor)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francis Duboin, 1872-1875 (later Vicar Apostolic of Senegal)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victor Guilloux, 1875-1878 (later Prefect Apostolic of Malgaches Islands)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francis Corbet, 1878-1880 (later Vicar Apostolic of Diego-Suarez)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francis Beaud, 1880-1885</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anthony Garmy, 1885-1895</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francis Ditner, 1895-1907</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bishop John T. Murphy, C.S.Sp., 1916-1926</td>
<td>Jerome Rochette de Lempdes, 1907-1921</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Arch) Bishop James Leen, C.S.Sp., 1926-1949 (Coadjutor since 1925)</td>
<td>Cesar Berthet, 1921-1927</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gerald Bowe, 1950-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. **LITTLE MALGACHES ISLANDS**

B. G. 11, 377 ff. When France occupied the islands of Mayotte and Nossi-Bé, in 1843, the Spiritan Superior General found them added to his already heavy responsibilities. In 1850, therefore, when the Jesuits wanted to take over the evangelization of Madagascar from the Congregation and made it a condition that these tiny islands also be added to their territory, Father Libermann willingly acquiesced. He immediately arranged to have a Jesuit priest named Superior of the Prefecture.

N. D. 12, 35 ff.; 310 ff. After the Jesuit Fathers had succeeded in penetrating Madagascar in 1861, they no longer regarded the Malgaches Islands as
necessary to their purpose and offered to return them to the Congregation. The Spiritans already had many more missions than they could conveniently staff, so they turned a deaf ear even when the offer was repeated again and again. Finally, in 1878, the Holy See itself made the request and the Congregation had no choice but to accept the islands and staff them with its own personnel.

There has been little to report by way of missionary progress. Mohammedan influence is so strong in the Malgaches that apostolic efforts there do not produce anything like the results attained in other islands which are free from Islamism.

In 1898, when the Holy Ghost Fathers took over the northern half of Madagascar, the Malgaches Prefecture was added to the domain of the Spiritan Vicar Apostolic of Diego-Suarez. Later, in 1923, it was transferred to the Vicariate of Majunga. At the same time, the Comores Islands became part of this Vicariate also. All of these islands remained under the care of the Congregation until 1932 when the Propaganda removed them from Spiritan control and entrusted them together with a small section of Northern Madagascar to the French Capuchins. This sudden transfer gave rise to unexpected complications which it took several years to solve.

**Ecclesiastical and Religious Superiors of the Little Malgaches Islands**

*Prefects Apostolic*

Fr. Peter Dalmond, 1841-1847  
Bishop Alexander Monnet, C.S.Sp., 1848-1849 (Vicar Apostolic)  
Fr. Weber, C.S.Sp., 1849-1851  
1851-1878: Jesuit Mission  
Fr. Victor Guilloux, C.S.Sp., 1878-1882  
Fr. Alexander Mauger, C.S.Sp., 1882-1886  
Fr. John Guilmin, C.S.Sp., 1886-1891  
Fr. Louis Walter, C.S.Sp., 1891-1899

1899-1923: see Diego Suarez, Madagascar  
1923-1932: see Majunga, Madagascar  
1933 ff.: Capuchin Mission
4. MADAGASCAR

Goyau, II, 34 ff. Vincentian priests appear to have been the first to undertake
B. G. 35, 811 ff. the Christianization of this enormous island off the coast of East
Africa. They arrived in 1648, but after twenty-three years of
incessant labor and untold suffering produced no appreciable
results, these valiant missionaries shook the dust from their feet.

R. H. M., 5,
414 ff.; 16,
89 ff.
B. G. 35, 815 ff.
A. R. 98, 356

A new effort was made in 1832 when Father Henry de Solages,
Prefect Apostolic of Reunion, went to Madagascar. His intention
was to gain admission to the Court of Queen Ranavolona and
induce her to authorize the establishment of Catholic missions,
but the Queen’s hostile Minister intercepted the courageous apostle,
imprisoned him under constant guard in a wretched hut, gave the
jailors strict orders not to help him in any way, and thus left him
to die a martyr’s death by starvation.

N. D. Compl.,
296 ff.
N. B. 335 ff.
R. H. M., 5,
416 ff.

Eleven years later, Father Dalmond became Prefect Apostolic
of Madagascar and tried to effect a permanent establishment on
this island where France then had a precarious political foothold.
Father Fourdinier, the Spiritan Superior General, the Jesuits, and
Libermann’s priests of the Holy Heart of Mary were all interested
B. G. 35, 817 ff. in promoting the success of the enterprise. In 1845 Father Dal-
mond, accompanied by a few Jesuits and Father Monnet, then a Jesuit novice, landed at St. Augustine Bay. Although the reception
was rather friendly at first, increasing hostility forced the Prefect
to withdraw about four months later and concentrate his attention
on the little Malgaches Islands.

Shortly after, Father Monnet went to France, joined the
Holy Ghost Fathers, and became their Superior General in 1848.

Later that same year, when Father Libermann and his priests en-
tered the Congregation, the Holy See named Monnet Bishop of
Pella and Vicar Apostolic of Madagascar. In June 1849, a French
navy vessel carried the zealous Bishop and four Jesuit priests to his
dangerous mission via Rio de Janeiro and Reunion. However, he
was not destined to set foot again on the land of his apostolic
dreams. A pernicious fever seized him when he debarked at the
off-shore island of Mayotte and in a few hours’ time put an end
to the eventful life of this intrepid priest. It was during the next
year that Father Libermann arranged for the Jesuits to take over
the Christianization of Madagascar.

B. G. 19, 305

Forty years later, when the Jesuit missions in southern Mad-
agascar had reached a point of splendid development, heavy
pressure was brought to bear on the Spiritans to resume their
apostolic activities in the northern third of the island where there
was only one resident priest. It was the hottest and most humid
part of the country, devoid of any roads or navigable rivers and
therefore a most difficult mission. In 1898 the Congregation
accepted it, and Father Corbet became the first Vicar Apostolic
of North Madagascar. In 1923, after twenty-five years of hard
work and the sacrifice of many young lives, the Faith showed
consoling progress: over twenty-two thousand Catholics were
worshipping in more than two hundred churches and chapels.
It was then that the mission was divided into the two Vicariates of
Diego-Suarez and Majunga, both entrusted to the Holy Ghost
Fathers. As the Church advanced still further, later subdivisions
have considerably reduced the extent of both missions.

B. G. 44, 244

In 1955 the Holy See set up the hierarchy of Madagascar and
promoted the two incumbent Vicars Apostolic to the status of
resident Bishops. The flourishing condition of these young
Churches appear from a glance at their latest statistics; Diego-
Suarez has over 50,000 Catholics and 17,000 catechumens;
Majunga, nearly 33,000 Catholics and 8,000 Catechumens. Both dioceses have their own junior seminaries, from which thus far a dozen native priests have been ordained. Religious vocations also are on the increase. In 1951 a special novitiate for local Spiritan Brothers was opened in Antalaha. Four years later it had seven professed members and ten aspirants. The two dioceses together operate a hundred and fifty-six grade schools in which 11,000 boys and girls receive their early training.

**List of Ecclesiastical and Religious Superiors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ecclesiastical Superiors</th>
<th>Religious Superiors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>All Madagascar</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fr. Peter Dalmond, 1841-1847</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefect Apostolic (named Vicar Apostolic in 1848 after his death)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. E. Alexander Monnet, C.S.Sp, 1848-1849 (Titular Bishop of Pella)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1851: Jesuit Mission</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vicariate of North Madagascar (Diego-Suarez)</strong></td>
<td>also Religious Superiors till 1939</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. E. Francis Corbet, C.S.Sp, 1898-1914 (Titular Bishop of Obba)</td>
<td>Fr. John Besnard, 1939-1951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. E. Augustus Fortineau, C.S.Sp, 1914-1946 (Titular Bishop of Chytra)</td>
<td>Fr. Andrew Britschu, 1951- (District combined with that of Majunga)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. E. John Wolff, C.S.Sp, 1946-1955 (Titular Bishop of Phatano)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Diocese of Diego-Suarez</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bishop John Wolff, C.S.Sp, 1955-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vicariate of Majunga</strong></td>
<td>also Religious Superior till 1939</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. E. Paul Pichot, C.S.Sp, 1923-1940 (Titular Bishop of Raphanea)</td>
<td>Fr. Maurice Huré, 1939-1942</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

H. E. John David, C.S.Sp., 1954-1955 (Titular Bishop of Mel-lopolis)

Diocese of Majunga
Bishop John David, C.S.Sp., 1955-

5. PONDICHERRY AND CHANDERNAGOR

Cl. C. 68 f.

Because Paris frowned on foreign priests ministering to French subjects, the Propaganda created a special prefecture in 1828 for the French-speaking inhabitants of France's enclaves in India. After two dangerous mistakes which fortunately were discovered in time, the Spiritan Superior General, Father Bertout, found the right man for the position when he presented a secular priest, Father Peter Calmels, to be the first Prefect. Father Calmels lasted more than thirty years, despite the fact that jurisdictional and governmental misunderstandings kept arising with monotonous regularity. As the reader will recall from Chapter IX, the Prefect's jurisdiction was limited to Europeans, Creoles and people of mixed origins, while the Indians belonged to the jurisdiction of a Vicar Apostolic.

The difficulty, of course, was to draw the exact dividing line between "Indians" and "those of mixed origins." In desperation, the Propaganda decided in 1841 that a person's clothes would determine his place in the administrative scheme: Indian costume placed him in the Vicariate; European dress referred him to the Prefecture. In practice this meant that one could change jurisdictions merely by putting on a hat and coat. It necessarily resulted in confusion and interminable difficulties between the Vicar Apostolic and the Prefect.

These tiny but annoying conflicts ended only in 1880 when the Holy Ghost Fathers sent Father Francis Corbet, one of their own ment as Prefect. Very sensibly, he arranged with the Vicar that each would give the other jurisdiction in doubtful cases. At the same time he did his best to have the cause of the whole confusion removed by vigorously supporting the absorption of the Prefecture into the Vicariate. As Chapter IX recorded, his wish was fulfilled
in 1886 when the Holy See created the Archdiocese of Pondicherry to replace the two previous jurisdictions.

The first members of the Congregation appeared on the scene in this distant Prefecture in 1861 when the Spiritans opened a technical school in Chandernagor. Later they added the College of Pondicherry and assumed responsibility for the entire service of the Prefecture. After the suppression of the Prefecture, however, they resisted all efforts to keep them in India. They withdrew entirely from Asia and thereafter concentrated their efforts on Africa.

Ecclesiastical and Religious Superiors of Pondicherry

**Prefects Apostolic**

- Fr. Peter Calmels, 1828-1859
- Fr. Peter Brunie, 1859-1879 (Ecclesiastical Superior)
- Fr. John Delassiaz, 1879-1880 (Vice Prefect)
- Fr. Francis Corbet, C.S.Sp., 1880-1886 (later Vicar Apostolic of Diego-Suarez)

**Religious Superiors C.S.Sp.**

- Fr. Fritsch, 1862-1864
- Fr. Magloire Barthet, 1864-1875 (later Vicar Apostolic of Senegambia)
- Fr. Bartholomew Stoffel, 1875-1879

also Religious Superior