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**AFRICAN PERCEPTIONS OF THE MISSIONARIES AND THEIR MESSAGE:  
WESLEYANS AT MOUNT COKE AND BUTTERWORTH, 1825-35**

Thesis Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the  
Degree of Master of Arts in the Department of History,  
University of Cape Town

by

**HILDEGARDE HELENE FAST**

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## ABSTRACT

Missionary endeavours in the Eastern Cape were characterized by African resistance to the Christian Gospel during the first half of the nineteenth century. Current explanations for this rejection point to the opposition of the chiefs, the association that the listeners made between the missionaries and their white oppressors, and the threat to communal solidarity. This thesis aims to see if these explanations fully reveal the reasons for Xhosa resistance to Christianity by examining African perceptions of the missionaries and their message at the Wesleyan mission stations of Mount Coke and Butterworth for the period 1825-35. The research is based upon the Wesleyan Missionary Society correspondence and missionary journals and is corroborated and supplemented by travellers' records and later studies in African religion and social anthropology.

The economic, social, and religious background of the Wesleyans is described to show how the Christian message was limited to their culture and system of thought. Concepts of divinity, morality, and the afterlife are compared to demonstrate the vast differences between Wesleyan and African worldviews and the inability of the missionaries to overcome these obstacles and to show the relevance of Christianity to African material and spiritual needs.

Various types of perceptions are surveyed to show that, though the missionaries were respected for their spiritual role, their character and lifestyle presented an unappealing model of the Christian life. The threat that the missionary message posed to the structure and functioning of African communities is examined as well as African perceptions of these implications. A theory of conversion is advanced which reveals a consistent pattern of association with the missionaries for reasons of self-interest, exposure to the Gospel over a lengthy period of time, and finally conversion. The missionary-African contact of this period is thus characterized as the encounter between two systems of thought which did not engage.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is rare that a Masters student chances upon a subject which is of interest to scholars in many fields. I was particularly fortunate in this respect, having been able to discuss my thesis with students from fields as diverse as Applied Maths, Biology, Archaeology, and Law. The topic of 'African Perceptions' elicited strong reactions from all of them and they provided me with willing ears and many valuable insights; I am especially indebted to Archie Maurellis and Lungile Shoba in this respect.

Others have contributed valuable assistance to the writing of this thesis without bearing any responsibility for what it contains. I am grateful to Christopher Saunders and Julian Cobbing for helpful comments on earlier drafts and to Jeff Peires and Greg Cuthbertson for referring me to important sources. My discussions with Gabriel Setiloane served to challenge my preconceptions and to develop my ideas on African divinity. Special thanks are due to my supervisor, Basil le Cordeur, for his meticulous proof-reading and crucial guidance in defining my field of study. I would also like to acknowledge the financial assistance of the Harry Oppenheimer Institute for African Studies. Finally, I thank my family for their long-distance support via the fax 'hot-line'.

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of Tante Mia, who encouraged me to express myself through writing.

Hildegarde H. Fast  
Cape Town, February 1991

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## Abbreviations

W.M.S.	Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society Correspondence
<u>Wesleyan Reports</u>	The Report(s) of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society
<u>Missionary Notices</u>	Missionary Notices Relating Principally to the Foreign Missions
<u>Conference Minutes</u>	Minutes of the Methodist Conferences

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The encounter between Christianity and African culture in South Africa dates back to the arrival of the Europeans at the Cape. The Europeans brought with them a way of life and thinking which was rooted in their religion and which consequently influenced their behaviour toward the peoples with whom they interacted. Although some individual settlers and ministers attempted of their own initiative to provide religious instruction to Africans,<sup>1</sup> it was not until a Moravian missionary arrived in 1737 that systematic evangelization of Africans commenced. Only at the end of that century did missionary endeavour penetrate the Eastern Cape and begin its proselytization of the chiefdoms collectively known as the *amaXhosa*.<sup>2</sup>

Since their arrival, the missionaries have often been the foci of controversy, provoking opposition from government, colonists and Africans alike. The issues surrounding their aims and methods have extended to the present and are constantly debated by historians. Indeed, it is difficult to conceive of a history of the nineteenth-century Eastern Cape without taking the missionaries into account, both for the roles they played and for the source materials they have left behind.

The discussion has for the most part centred upon the missionaries themselves. The missionary/Christian accounts give detailed information of missionary achievements in overcoming hardships to establish churches and schools.<sup>3</sup> These are by and large factual accounts that treat the increase of mission institutions as evidence of growth and

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<sup>1</sup>G.B.A. Gerdener, Two Centuries of Grace (Stellenbosch, 1937), p. 12; J. du Plessis, A History of Christian Missions in South Africa (Cape Town, 1911; repr. 1965), p. 36.

<sup>2</sup>For the sake of convenience, the term 'Xhosa' will be used to refer to the language and people instead of the linguistically more correct terms *isiXhosa* and *amaXhosa*.

<sup>3</sup>For example, du Plessis, History of Christian Missions; Ernst van Calker, Hundert Jahre Kaffernmission der Brüdergemeinde, 1828-1928 (Herrnhut, 1928); R.H.W. Shepherd, Where Aloes Flame (London, 1948); Henry Calderwood, Caffres and Caffre Missions (London, 1858).

fail to evaluate the response to or impact of Christian teachings. In the tradition of J.T. van der Kemp and John Philip, a 'missionary view' emerged which represented the attempt to prevent or correct injustices suffered by the indigenous peoples at the hands of the colonists and the government. It was this view that strongly influenced liberal historiography,<sup>4</sup> which presented the missionaries as 'between two fires',<sup>5</sup> being used by both the chiefs and the colonial authorities to further their aims.<sup>6</sup> This opinion has been countered by historians who have suggested that the evangelists played a deliberate part in advancing imperialism and capitalism.<sup>7</sup> Although the liberal and radical schools differ substantially in their treatment of the missionaries, neither examines the African response to the Gospel and the reasons for it.

In the past three decades, this shortcoming has been addressed to a limited extent. Two notable studies in the latter genre are Norman Etherington's study of missionaries among the Zulu<sup>8</sup> and Donovan Williams' thesis on the Eastern Cape.<sup>9</sup> It is clear from their investigations that the first half-century of missionary activity did not produce conversions commensurate with the efforts and funds invested. The reasons given for this lack of response - for it was not a wholesale rejection - are persuasive. Both authors point to the opposition of the chiefs, whose authority was being

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<sup>4</sup>T.R.H. Davenport, South Africa: A Modern History, 3rd ed. (Johannesburg, 1987), p. xvii.

<sup>5</sup>I.W. Wauchope, The Natives and their Missionaries (Lovedale, 1908), p. 38.

<sup>6</sup>Monica Wilson and Leonard Thompson, eds., The Oxford History of South Africa, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1969), vol. 1, p. 266.

<sup>7</sup>N. Majeke (Dora Taylor), The Role of the Missionaries in Conquest (Johannesburg, 1952; repr. Cumberwood, 1986); J. Cobbing, 'The Mfecane as Alibi: Thoughts on Dithakong and Mbolompo', Journal of African History 29 (1988).

<sup>8</sup>Norman A. Etherington, Preachers, Peasants and Politics in Southeast Africa, 1835-1880 (London, 1978).

<sup>9</sup>Donovan Williams, 'The Missionaries on the Eastern Frontier of the Cape Colony 1799-1853' (University of the Witwatersrand, Ph.D. thesis, 1959).

undermined, the inevitable association that the listeners made between the white missionaries and their white oppressors, and the threat to communal solidarity. Yet these explanations do not examine the actual content of the missionary message and how this content was perceived. Was Xhosa resistance to the Gospel simply an extension of the battle to maintain independence in the face of rapidly encroaching white settlement, or was it perhaps an indication that the Xhosa perceived the message to be irrelevant to their needs? Only a close examination of Xhosa perceptions of the missionaries and their message can reveal if current explanations fully reveal the reasons for Xhosa resistance to Christianity.

### Methodology

The intention of this research was to provide an in-depth case study of African perceptions of and response to the Gospel at two mission stations in Xhosaland.<sup>10</sup> The stations of Mount Coke and Butterworth, situated in the present-day Ciskei and Transkei respectively, were chosen for three reasons. Firstly, homogeneity of missionary background was sought in order to provide an analysis of the interaction between a single missionary society and an African culture that it encountered; both of the stations studied were established by the Wesleyan Methodists among the Xhosa. Secondly, the particular stations studied were chosen because of their differing experiences in relation to the colony to assess the extent to which association with whites influenced reception of the Gospel. Ndlambe and his people at Mount Coke had had much direct military interaction with whites along the colonial frontier before the missionaries arrived, whereas Hintsa and his Gcaleka had experienced less direct contact and dislocation before William Shrewsbury founded Butterworth. And lastly, in order to study initial

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<sup>10</sup>The word 'Xhosaland' is used in favour of the term 'Caffraria' which was in use at the time and currently has a pejorative connotation.

African perceptions of missionaries and how these changed over time, the stations selected were the first to be established in that area: Mount Coke was the earliest mission to the Ndlambe (begun in 1825), and Butterworth was the first station among the Gcaleka (1827).

The time period studied extends to 1835. There was a significant transformation from an open African attitude at the period of initial contact to the concerted resistance displayed toward Christianity ten years later. The 1834-35 Frontier War sealed the coalescence of Christianity with white aggression, with the twenty years that followed being characterized by deliberate resistance and opposition to missionary teachings.<sup>11</sup> This research thus focusses on the crucial period during which African perceptions developed.

It is necessary to explain the use of the terms 'Xhosa', 'Cape Nguni', and 'African' in this thesis. The Xhosa were a group of clans belonging to a larger classification of peoples known as the Cape Nguni, which included the Xhosa,<sup>12</sup> Mpondo, Mpondomise, Bomvana, and Thembu, and were characterized by a remarkable homogeneity of culture and language.<sup>13</sup> Not all the people living on the frontier belonged to the Cape Nguni, however, for the entire frontier was an area of tremendous flux and intermixture.<sup>14</sup> As

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<sup>11</sup>Williams, 'Missionaries', pp. 166, 337-350.

<sup>12</sup>The Xhosa were not all descendants of one person but were identified as subjects of the royal Tshawe clan: J.B. Peires, 'History of the Xhosa 1700-1835' (Rhodes University, M.A. thesis, 1976), p. 48.

<sup>13</sup>Van Warmelo and Pauw treat the Cape Nguni as homogeneous with regard to traditional culture: N.J. van Warmelo, 'Classification of Cultural Groups', in The Bantu-Speaking Peoples of Southern Africa, W.D. Hammond-Tooke, ed. (London, 1974), pp. 61-62; B.A. Pauw, 'Patterns of Christianization among the Tswana and the Xhosa-Speaking Peoples', in African Systems of Thought, M. Fortes and G. Dieterlen, eds. (London, 1965), p. 241.

<sup>14</sup>William Shaw commented on the 'great diversity of colour' among the 'Caffres': The Report(s) of the Wesleyan-Methodist Missionary Society 1824 (henceforth Wesleyan Reports), 21 July 1824 Shaw letter, p. 54.

Donovan Williams has shown in his thesis and subsequent research,<sup>15</sup> many station residents were not Xhosa, such as those of Khoikhoi and Mfengu origin. It would be inaccurate to portray these groups as 'Xhosa', therefore listeners of the Gospel will be designated with the more inclusive term 'African' whereas the culture in which they lived will be termed 'Xhosa' or 'Cape Nguni'.

Regardless of their specific origins, these peoples resided in a culture with which they interacted and had much in common. For example, the Nguni culture of the immigrant Mfengu was very closely related to that of the Xhosa.<sup>16</sup> Likewise, the Gqunukhwebe were largely Khoikhoi in origin,<sup>17</sup> yet their customs were those of the Cape Nguni. Missionary comments on African response are interpreted within Xhosa society and cultures broadly related to it. African traditional belief systems - like that of the Cape Nguni - are very similar in that they are communally based and revolve around the ancestor cult. A wide range of sources was thus consulted: some of the anthropological sources referred to describe Cape Nguni history, religion, and culture exclusively,<sup>18</sup> the remainder discuss African or Bantu-speaking cultures as a whole.<sup>19</sup>

Of all the whites in the Eastern Cape at this time, the missionaries had the most complete knowledge of Xhosa customs and culture. Nonetheless, their information was

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<sup>15</sup>Williams, 'Missionaries', Chapter 7; Donovan Williams, 'Social and Economic Aspects of Christian Mission Stations in Caffraria 1816-54', *Historia* 30 (2) 1985 & 31 (1) 1986.

<sup>16</sup>Richard A. Moyer, 'A History of the Mfengu 1815-1865' (University of London, Ph.D. thesis, 1976), pp. 10, 121, 475.

<sup>17</sup>J.B. Peires, *House of Phalo* (Berkeley, 1981), p. 56; cf. Williams, 'Missionaries', p. 255.

<sup>18</sup>Monica Hunter, *Reaction to Conquest* (London, 1936); John Henderson Soga, *The Ama-Xosa: Life and Customs* (Lovedale, 1931) and *The South-eastern Bantu* (Johannesburg, 1930); Janet Hodgson, *God of the Xhosa* (Cape Town, 1982).

<sup>19</sup>For example, John V. Taylor, *Primal Vision* (London, 1963); Placide Tempels, *Bantu Philosophy* (Paris, 1959); Gabriel Setiloane, *African Theology* (Johannesburg, 1986).

often selective, prejudiced, and even more often incomplete.<sup>20</sup> In general, the eyewitness accounts of the missionaries were reliable whereas the stories told them via hearsay were not.<sup>21</sup> To fill in the gaps and interpret missionary observations, it is necessary to draw on the above sources of African social anthropology and religion to corroborate and supplement the correspondence. Much of the fieldwork, such as Hunter's study of the Mpondo, was done over a century after initial missionary contact. It is by comparison of this work with missionary and traveller narratives that a picture of Xhosa culture in the early nineteenth century can emerge. Certain subjects were never mentioned in the missionary and traveller correspondence, such as the impact of conversions on the kinship system, necessitating heavy reliance on social anthropology. Wherever such significant omissions occur in the missionary records, no more than speculation as to African perceptions can be claimed.

Additional factors must be taken into account in weighing missionary comments about African response. Firstly, what the missionaries did not say is as important as what was said. If there was any response during a service, the missionaries recorded it in detail; in the case of little or negative response, the letters indicated that the people heard with 'seriousness and attention'<sup>22</sup> or that 'a gracious influence was felt'<sup>23</sup> during a sermon. The lives and personalities of converts were often described at length

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<sup>20</sup>An analysis of the social, economic, and religious background of the Wesleyan missionaries labouring in Xhosaland follows in Chapter 2.

<sup>21</sup>For example, Ayliff relays the sensational story of how a Xhosa and an Mfengu killed each other's families over a minor matter. The story was told to Ayliff and it is difficult to accept its veracity: Ayliff Journal, 21 June 1831. Ayliff gives other accounts of 'brutal murders' and witchcraft accusations; most of these, however, were told to him: Missionary Notices Relating Principally to the Foreign Missions (henceforth Missionary Notices) 202 (1832), 8 March 1832 Ayliff letter, pp. 157-158.

<sup>22</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 27 April 1828 & 27 March 1831.

<sup>23</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 2 March 1828, 6 September 1829, 14 August 1831; Ayliff Journal, 24 October 1830.

because conversions were so few and far between. Secondly, the responses described must be carefully analyzed to discover the extent to which they were authentic and representative of the population. The emotionalism during services was usually exhibited by station residents and not by the visiting Xhosa; in addition, many Africans who did respond to the Gospel had fled to the station because they were social undesirables in their communities.

A final factor to consider is the missionaries' intended audience. The leaders of the mission and its financial supporters were eager for news of success. As the letters and journal extracts became public information, the missionaries elaborated fully on their successes and took care not to mention or over-emphasize setbacks. Quite often, the 'journal extracts' sent to mission headquarters were more complete and detailed than the original journal entries.<sup>24</sup> The resulting distortions in missionary records of response to the Gospel must be borne in mind in assessing African perceptions.

### **Transmission of the Message**

The very theme of 'African perceptions' presents a host of challenges to the historian. Preliterate Xhosa society did not leave any record of the initial impressions that the Christian message made upon its listeners, thus making the primary sources of information the missionaries themselves. The researcher must be aware of the obstacles posed in interpreting missionary correspondence and develop a critical approach to them.

First, the extent to which Wesleyan sermons were understood by African listeners must be addressed. By the time the ink had dried on the Europeans' correspondence,

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<sup>24</sup>For example, compare Shrewsbury Journal, 20 & 25 December 1829 and Wesleyan-Methodist Missionary Society Correspondence, MSE 40, microfiche copies, South African Library (henceforth W.M.S.), 20 & 25 December 1829 Shrewsbury journal extracts, 31 December 1829. In these cases, the more complete entry is cited in the footnotes.

the information recorded had passed through various 'filters' and media and had been responded to, with these responses running the same gamut in reverse (see Figure 1). Before the message left the lips of the evangelists, it had passed through the first filter of British culture, and therefore it is more accurate to speak of the missionary message as opposed to the Christian message.<sup>25</sup>

Cultural differences were further compounded by the language barrier. The missionaries had difficulty in mastering Xhosa, and the really significant breakthrough in learning it only came with the discovery of the euphonic concord in 1833.<sup>26</sup> Ayliff noted the importance of this milestone:

The translation of Mr. Boyce with his excellent grammar of the language will afford us considerable help in the acquirement [sic] of this most difficult language.<sup>27</sup>

In addition, there was no translation of the Bible so that the missionary had to translate not only the sermon but also the Scripture text. Although various books of the Bible were translated in the 1820's, it was not until the publication of Boyce's grammar that the Scriptures could be accurately translated.<sup>28</sup> Hence during the most crucial period of evangelization, the Wesleyans relied almost solely on interpreters for communication of the Gospel.

The ideas conveyed usually passed through two translations until the missionary had mastered Xhosa himself - if indeed he ever did. First the missionary had to

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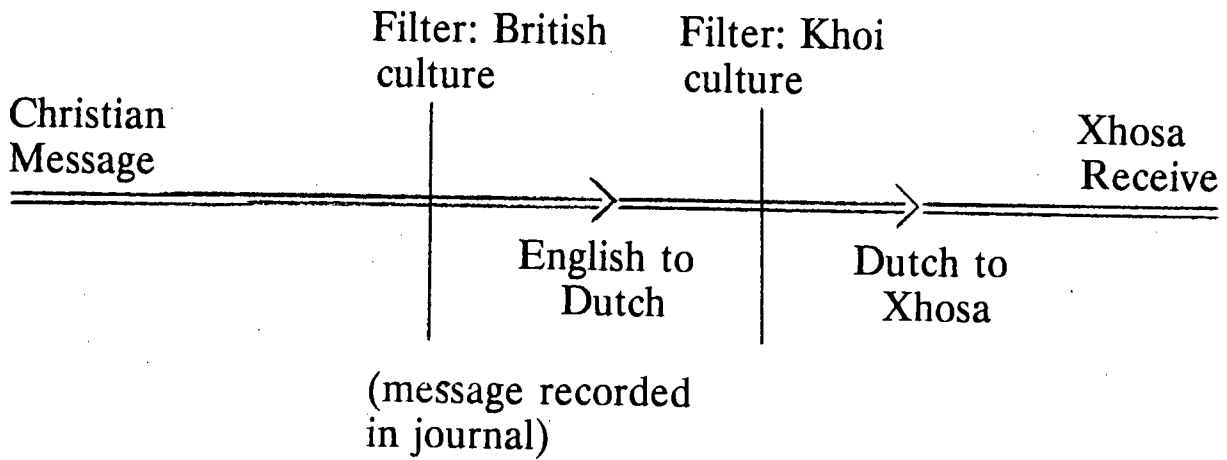
<sup>25</sup>The influence that European culture had on the Christian message is examined in subsequent chapters.

<sup>26</sup>L.A. Hewson and D.G.L. Cragg, 'W.B. Boyce and the Euphonic Concord', Journal of the Methodist Historical Society of South Africa, 2 (3) 1955, 2 (7) 1957, and 3 (1) 1958.

<sup>27</sup>Ayliff Journal, 31 August 1833.

<sup>28</sup>The first Scripture translations had to be revised in the light of the grammar rules outlined by Boyce: William Shaw, The Story of My Mission among the Native Tribes of South Eastern Africa (London, 1872), pp. 285-290.

### MESSAGE TRANSMISSION



### RESPONSE TO MESSAGE

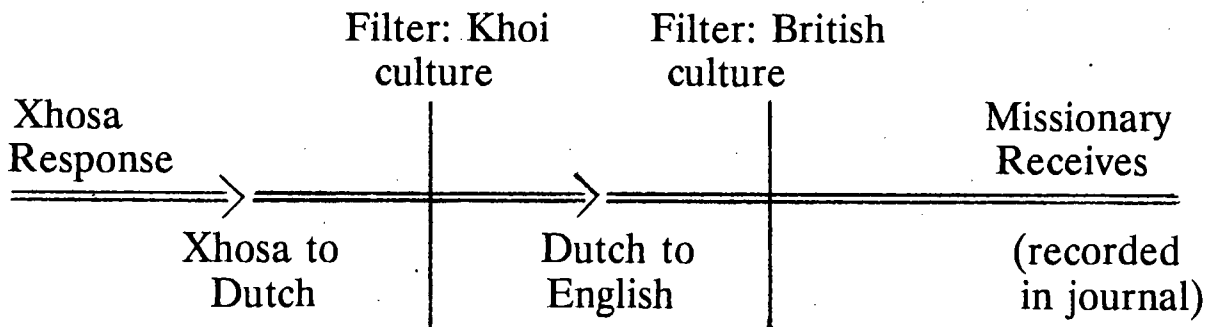


Figure 1

translate the message into Dutch, either by drawing on his own knowledge of Dutch as a second language<sup>29</sup> or by the use of an interpreter, and then the Dutch was translated by an African into Xhosa.<sup>30</sup> William Shrewsbury expressed some of the frustrations involved in this process:

A missionary sits down with his interpreter who cannot read a single line of the Word of God in any language and perhaps his knowledge of divine things is very imperfect and some of his notions erroneous. He opens the sacred volume and has to translate that in the first instance into barbarous Dutch that his interpreter may comprehend its meaning and then his interpreter tells him how that barbarous Dutch ought to be worded in the Caffre language. And thus every verse being a double translation, not only is the progress exceedingly slow, but it may be in several instances, after all care and caution have been employed, the genuine sense is not given, or in only a very imperfect manner.<sup>31</sup>

Consequently, much time was spent before preaching in 'diligently examining the interpreter to know whether he understood the text and matter of the sermon'.<sup>32</sup>

A good interpreter was crucial on a mission station. He had to possess the ability to arrest the people's attention, fully understand the language and content of the sermon, and have sufficient religious knowledge to be able to reply to listeners' queries.<sup>33</sup> Since the interpreters were drawn from a relatively small group of converts from mission stations within the Colony, their skills and character attributes were often deficient.<sup>34</sup> After hearing Kay preach, Steedman noted that

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<sup>29</sup>John Ayliff, A Vocabulary of the Kafir Language, 2nd ed. (London, 1863), pp. iii-iv; Shaw, My Mission, p. 16. Shrewsbury began his study of Dutch a year before commencing work among the Xhosa at Butterworth: J.V.B. Shrewsbury, Memorials of the Rev. William J. Shrewsbury (London, 1869), p. 252.

<sup>30</sup>Sometimes two missionaries were needed, one preaching in English, the other translating into Dutch: Shrewsbury, Memorials p. 226.

<sup>31</sup>W.M.S., Shrewsbury to Secretaries, 30 September 1830.

<sup>32</sup>W.M.S., 27 March 1825 James Whitworth journal extract, n.d.

<sup>33</sup>W.M.S., 13 April 1830 Kay journal extract, 24 April 1830.

<sup>34</sup>Kay could not preach on one occasion because his interpreter was inebriated: W.M.S., 12 March 1826 Kay journal extract, 1 April 1826. Shepstone's interpreter at

it rarely happens that a person is to be procured whose skill as an interpreter unites the equally essential qualities of genuine piety and a sincere devotion to the cause.<sup>35</sup>

One of Shrewsbury's interpreters became so emotional while interpreting sermons that he frequently found it difficult to continue.<sup>36</sup> Kay lamented of his interpreter,

[He] tries me exceedingly. I shall feel extremely happy when able to dispense with such a lifeless and frequently incorrect medium of communication.<sup>37</sup>

The interpreter used at one point by Ayliff was not a Christian believer,<sup>38</sup> making communication of Christian concepts difficult. Even when the interpreter was a Christian, Moodie noted, he would often still have

a very imperfect knowledge of [the missionaries'] meaning, and often makes sad blunders, which are not likely to escape the notice of the shrewd Kaffres.<sup>39</sup>

Delivery of the translation was also inadequate at times, as Harriet Ward noted:

we distinguished a loud monotonous voice holding forth in the Kafir language, without the smallest attention to intonation or emphasis. This was the interpreter...<sup>40</sup>

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Morley was from Butterworth and displayed signs of unstable behaviour: *ibid.*, Shrewsbury to Secretaries, 31 March 1829; cf. Williams, 'Missionaries', p. 198.

<sup>35</sup>Andrew Steedman, Wanderings and Adventures in the Interior of Southern Africa (London, 1835; repr. Cape Town, 1966), p. 28.

<sup>36</sup>He wept so abundantly, that he could scarcely get through one sentence without interruption': Wesleyan Reports (1827), Shrewsbury letter, 12 July 1827, pp. 45-46; cf. Shrewsbury Journal, 23 June & 1 July 1827, 10 April 1829. This may have been the same interpreter whom Shrewsbury later characterized as a man 'of very imbecile mind...frequently involved in the most childish disputes': W.M.S., 6 September 1830 Shrewsbury journal extract, 31 December 1830.

<sup>37</sup>W.M.S., 26 February 1826 Kay journal extract, 1 April 1826. Shaw expressed the same frustrations with his interpreter: William Shaw, The Journal of William Shaw, W.D. Hammond-Tooke, ed. (Cape Town, 1972), 8 June 1828 extract, p. 124.

<sup>38</sup>Ayliff Journal, 31 October 1830.

<sup>39</sup>Dunbar Moodie, Ten Years in South Africa, 2 vols. (London, 1835), vol. 2, pp. 256-257.

<sup>40</sup>Harriet Ward, Five Years in Kaffirland, 2 vols. (London, 1848), vol. 1, p. 114.

Problems in translating were further compounded by the absence of Xhosa words which could express Christian concepts such as 'justification', 'salvation', 'Holy Spirit', etc. The missionaries would take a Xhosa word like *umoya* (wind) and infuse it with a new meaning such as 'Spirit'. This may have resulted in considerable misunderstanding on the part of African listeners and the evangelists, who would conceivably assume that Africans accepted their meaning.<sup>41</sup>

Hence the value of a competent and pious translator on a station was, in Kay's words, 'incalculable, as he frequently opens our way to the minds of the people in the most happy and successful manner'.<sup>42</sup> Such an interpreter would often explain the Gospel to others without missionary supervision:

The substance of our sermons being by them familiarly re-iterated amidst the different groups around, the seed of truth is much more extensively spread abroad, than even the Missionary himself may be ready to imagine.<sup>43</sup>

Accurate communication of the message was therefore variable and depended heavily upon the personnel available.

Linguistic skills and character attributes were not the only factors influencing transmission of the message. The interpreters were almost invariably of Khoikhoi descent<sup>44</sup> and had had some exposure to Christianity. Their understanding was as a result a combination of Christian and/or Khoi religious ideas which explicitly

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<sup>41</sup>Callaway observed that 'untaught natives' would not use the word *umoya* in the sense of 'spirit' but would still apply it to the air we breathe: Henry Callaway, The Religious System of the Amazulu (1868-70; repr. Cape Town, 1970), p. 10.

<sup>42</sup>Stephen Kay, Travels and Researches in Caffraria (London, 1833), 8 August 1825 journal extract, p. 35; cf. W.M.S., 13 April 1830 Kay journal extract, 24 April 1830.

<sup>43</sup>Kay, Travels, 13 April 1830 journal extract, p. 271. Cf. James Backhouse, A Narrative of a Visit to the Mauritius and South Africa (London, 1844), 15 March 1839 journal extract, p. 272.

<sup>44</sup>Williams, 'Missionaries', p. 197.

acknowledged the existence and personhood of a Supreme Being.<sup>45</sup> The Xhosa conceived of divinity in a less personal and direct way.<sup>46</sup> Thus messages were conveyed from and to the missionaries which may have misled them (as well as the readers of their journals) to believe that the Xhosa understood what was meant by 'God' (*UTHixo*).

It is easy to identify the message the missionaries delivered since their sermon texts and topics were often recorded, but the reception and response were thus transmuted through language and culture. Missionary command of Xhosa was unfortunately weakest at the initial and most critical period of interaction: the four men who pioneered the Mount Coke and Butterworth stations were competent with languages but not as talented as some who followed.<sup>47</sup> It is left to the historian to decipher how much African listeners understood of the message and how they evaluated it.

In discussing Xhosa perceptions it is also of prime importance to examine how many people were exposed to Christian teachings on a first-hand basis. Although the mission stations were centrally located, the people were sparsely distributed due to their pastoralism. The Wesleyans itinerated about one week a month, covering considerable ground.<sup>48</sup> The missionary could preach to all the neighbouring kraals at most twice a year, with once a year being the norm.<sup>49</sup> The situation was, stated Shrewsbury,

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<sup>45</sup>Janet Hodgson, *God of the Xhosa* (Cape Town, 1982), p. 37.

<sup>46</sup>See Chapter 3.

<sup>47</sup>The Wesleyans W.B. Boyce and Richard Haddy distinguished themselves with their aptitude for learning and translating Xhosa: Ayliff Journal, 31 August 1833; Shaw to Secretaries, 21 December 1832; Williams, 'Missionaries', pp. 35-36.

<sup>48</sup>Ayliff reported that his itineration circuit was 80 miles: Ayliff Journal, 12 April 1833.

<sup>49</sup>W.M.S., Shrewsbury to Secretaries, 30 September 1829 & 30 September 1830. Shrewsbury stated that it was 'necessary for a Missionary to itinerate extensively and not confine his public ministry to the vicinity of his station...unless therefore the Missionary go to them, he might as well have remained in his native land': *ibid.*, Shrewsbury to

'unfavourable to the rapid spread of the Gospel.'<sup>50</sup> The influence of the missionaries' first-hand teachings was therefore limited primarily to the station residents and the nearby kraals. Even then, it was often difficult to attract children to day-school, particularly during sowing season and important events such as circumcision rituals.<sup>51</sup>

It must not be inferred that the people living far from the station were not exposed to missionary teachings. The stations may have been somewhat insular, but Xhosa society was not:

To furnish the chiefs with news, numbers are constantly running to and fro, in every part of the country, and sometimes for days together - inquiring, listening, and sifting in every company they meet with; insomuch that the former are quickly made acquainted with almost everything going on amongst neighbouring clans, and tribes...<sup>52</sup>

More than one missionary remarked on how the message was passed on to the surrounding villages by eyewitnesses, especially on the occasion of conversions. When one woman became 'powerfully affected' and wept and cried out in a service, Samuel Young reported that this

excited much inquiry on the subject of religion, and many came from the different kraals, or villages, in the neighbourhood to hear for themselves.<sup>53</sup>

Even if they could not visit the station themselves, there was usually someone prepared to pass on an account of the events:

Many came from distant parts of the country to inquire if these things were true or false; and as the Kafirs are fond of hearing and telling news,

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Secretaries, 26 September 1832.

<sup>50</sup>W.M.S., Shrewsbury to Secretaries, 31 March 1828.

<sup>51</sup>W.M.S., Shrewsbury to Secretaries, 30 September 1830. The truancy of the chief's sons could also adversely affect attendance.

<sup>52</sup>Stephen Kay, A Succinct Statement of the Kaffer's Case. (London, 1837), p. 79.

<sup>53</sup>Samuel Young, A Missionary Narrative of the Triumphs of Grace (London, 1842), p. 36.

on their return they became themselves the messengers of the news...<sup>54</sup>

William Shaw commented on the frequency of visitors at sabbath services,

who, in general, hear several sermons, and then return to their native villages...it is gratifying to reflect how large a portion of the tribe hear in this way more or less of the Gospel of Christ...by our hearing, that when at their homes, they often speak of, and sometimes enter into controversy with each other, about the things they hear, when thus assembled with us at worship.<sup>55</sup>

Shrewsbury confirmed this when he encountered many people while itinerating who had heard the Word at Mount Coke or Wesleyville<sup>56</sup> and Ayliff came upon a person who was discussing Jesus Christ at his homestead.<sup>57</sup> Said one young man, 'We sometimes converse together about the word of God'.<sup>58</sup> The more zealous converts also played a role in sharing their newfound faith with their countrymen.<sup>59</sup>

There was therefore much information and discussion circulating about the missionaries and their message, but how accurate it was is uncertain. After a commando raid, Kay reported that 80 or 90 miles away from Butterworth, 'the most exaggerated and romantic stories obtained full credence'.<sup>60</sup> When Kay returned from one itinerating tour, he found that his wife had been told of his death and was being comforted by a friend. Kay appeared

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<sup>54</sup>Young, Missionary Narrative, p. 40.

<sup>55</sup>Wesleyan Reports (1827), Shaw letter, p. 40; *ibid.* (1829), Mount Coke Report, p. 34.

<sup>56</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 2 September 1830.

<sup>57</sup>Ayliff Journal, 17 August 1833.

<sup>58</sup>W.M.S., 25 May 1828 Shrewsbury journal extract, 31 December 1828.

<sup>59</sup>Ayliff Journal, 17 & 22 July 1831.

<sup>60</sup>Kay, Travels, 10 July 1830 journal extract, p. 302. Said Ayliff: 'Not much dependence is to be placed on reports in Kafirland': Ayliff Journal, 17 February 1835.

bathed in sweat, covered with dust, and in a state of complete exhaustion. 'O dear!' said our friend, 'is this he, or is it his ghost?'<sup>61</sup>

In addition to the transformation effected by language and culture, then, comes the retelling of news.<sup>62</sup>

African response to the Gospel at this time must therefore be evaluated within the context of Xhosa culture and the difficulties the missionaries encountered in communicating the message and interpreting its response. It remains to examine how the religious, social and economic background of the missionaries influenced the message they preached and the African perceptions they recorded.

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<sup>61</sup>Kay, Travels, 3 June 1830 journal extract, pp. 292-293.

<sup>62</sup>W.M.S., 4 October 1825 Kay journal extract, 20 October 1825: 'What news have you brot? Whence come you? and What are you about? became as usual the first and leading topics.'

## 2: THE MISSIONARIES: ORIGINS, STRATEGY, AND PROGRESS

### Missionary Origins: Social, Economic, and Religious

Evangelicalism was the movement within the Protestant world that began in the early eighteenth century and developed steadily throughout the nineteenth century. It was a popular movement of great psychological power and the capacity to spread to all parts of society.<sup>1</sup> The democratic, egalitarian assemblies without their social or religious hierarachy appealed to the common man, encouraging activities such as amateur preaching and prophecy.<sup>2</sup> Much of the zeal and the political energy of this movement was directed to moral and religious campaigns, such as anti-slavery, temperance, and foreign missions.<sup>3</sup> The missionary movement was thus an expression of the social emancipation of the under-privileged classes in Great Britain that came about due to the Evangelical Revival, Industrial Revolution, and the social upheaval in France.<sup>4</sup>

Almost all of the missionaries - in common with most evangelical converts<sup>5</sup> - consequently belonged to the artisan and lower middle classes and were not, as Cowper Rose observed, 'of a class that would in their own country have ever known the refinements of life'.<sup>6</sup> Most belonged to the emerging class of 'skilled mechanics'

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<sup>1</sup>Geoffrey Best, 'Evangelicalism and the Victorians' in The Victorian Crisis of Faith, Anthony Symondson, ed. (London, 1970), p. 37.

<sup>2</sup>E.J. Hobsbawm, The Age of Revolution, Europe 1879-1848 (London, 1962; repr. 1978), p. 277.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 277.

<sup>4</sup>Max Warren, Social History and Christian Mission (London, 1967), p. 37.

<sup>5</sup>John Pudney, John Wesley and His World (Norwich, 1978), p. 116.

<sup>6</sup>Cowper Rose, Four Years in Southern Africa (London, 1829), p. 139.

(artisans and tradesmen)<sup>7</sup> and had not completed secondary or higher education.<sup>8</sup>

Education was not the determining factor in missionary selection, as Moodie noted:

The missionaries, with a very few exceptions, have been chosen, rather on account of their zeal than from possessing the enlarged views and knowledge of human nature which are absolutely necessary in converting barbarians.<sup>9</sup>

Hence the missionaries were conscious of their social position and their upward mobility became the ideological mold for Africa.<sup>10</sup>

The evangelical religious message was one which emphasized salvation by grace through faith alone and the centrality and authority of the Scriptures, as opposed to tradition.<sup>11</sup> The concept of sin and freedom from its bondage figured in almost every evangelical sermon.<sup>12</sup> The missionaries who bore this message had a clear sense of the divine call and were 'inner-directed men' who sought the Holy Spirit for their inner sense of direction.<sup>13</sup> Their stern religion was reflected in their sobriety, seriousness, disciplined will, and well-ordered life.<sup>14</sup> Their ideas of useful and constant work and

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<sup>7</sup>Warren, Social History, p. 39; Richard Elphick, 'Africans and the Christian Campaign in Southern Africa', in The Frontier in History, Howard Lamar and Leonard Thompson, eds. (New Haven, 1981), pp. 279-280.

<sup>8</sup>Warren, Social History, p. 38. The exceptions were the Scottish missionaries and self-taught men like William Shrewsbury.

<sup>9</sup>Moodie, Ten Years, vol. 2, p. 282. The acquisition of 'worldly learning' was in fact not valued: Best, 'Evangelicalism', p. 50.

<sup>10</sup>Jean and John L. Comaroff, 'The Colonization of Consciousness in South Africa', Economy and Society 18 (3) 1989, p. 270; cf. Warren, Social History, p. 39.

<sup>11</sup>Best, 'Evangelicalism', p. 38.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 38. The importance of reading the Scriptures for oneself made the teaching of literacy imperative, hence the establishment of schools was a top priority: Michael Ashley, 'African Education and Society in the Nineteenth Century Eastern Cape' in Beyond the Cape Frontier, C.C. Saunders and Robin Derricourt, eds. (London, 1974), p. 201.

<sup>13</sup>Warren, Social History, pp. 44-46.

<sup>14</sup>Thomas O. Beidelman, Colonial Evangelism (Bloomington, Ind., 1982), pp. 66-67.

self-examination left little scope for cultural flexibility, leisurely pursuits, or intellectualism, and their efforts to 'constrain the self' produced a rigid and narrow person unlikely to appeal either to other Europeans or to potential African converts.<sup>15</sup>

Their message went beyond the purely religious. The faith of the missionaries was no different from other religions in that it was interpreted within the culture in which it was found. The evangelists were profoundly influenced by a conviction that their civilization was superior and that it was inseparable from Christianity;<sup>16</sup> as the Wesleyan Stephen Kay put it, 'our grand object...is to civilize as well as to evangelize the tribes'.<sup>17</sup> Evangelicals viewed the natives as 'half-devil, half-child'<sup>18</sup> who due to their 'depraved' nature were in need of civilizing influence to 'materially contribute to the amelioration of their civil and moral state'.<sup>19</sup> The message they expounded was thus a selective one which emphasized certain aspects of Christianity to the exclusion of others and which added superfluous cultural content to the message.

'Civilization' was defined by the nonconformist virtues of industrious, property-respecting, sabbatarian Britain.<sup>20</sup> Because the missionaries came from a capitalist country, they were committed also to the ideal of self-improvement through rational

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., pp. 50, 71.

<sup>16</sup>John V. Taylor, Primal Vision (London, 1963), p. 5; Edmund Ilogu, Christianity and Ibo Culture (Leiden, 1974), p. 90. The issue was not whether evangelization and civilization were inseparable, but rather which was to come first: Kate Crehan, 'Khoi, Boer and Missionary: An Anthropological Study of the Role of Missionaries on the Cape Frontier 1799-1850' (University of Manchester, M.A. thesis, 1978), pp. 121-122.

<sup>17</sup>W.M.S., 3 June 1830 Kay journal extract, 21 June 1830. As the quote shows, sometimes 'civilizing' took precedence over 'converting'.

<sup>18</sup>Beidelman, Colonial Evangelism, p. 51.

<sup>19</sup>W.M.S., Resolutions Passed at the Annual Meeting, 1826, #2.

<sup>20</sup>A.T.C. Slee, 'Some Aspects of Wesleyan Methodism in the Albany District Between 1830 and 1844' (Rhodes University, M.A. thesis, 1946), p. 110.

labour.<sup>21</sup> Their alien culture was brought to Africa and imposed on others - a process the Comaroffs call the 'colonization of consciousness'.<sup>22</sup> It is because these social and economic changes they brought were pre-meditated that the missionaries have been labelled 'revolutionaries'.<sup>23</sup>

Evangelicalism was channelled into three different movements in Britain: non-conformity (Protestant dissent), evangelicalism within the Anglican Church, and Methodism.<sup>24</sup> Wesleyan Methodism was very much within the evangelical mainstream described above. It drew most of its support from the English working class<sup>25</sup> and was a missionary-minded organization.<sup>26</sup> Personal piety was stressed above all and the only reading materials recommended were the Scriptures and writings pertaining to them, such as the works of John Wesley and John Fletcher.<sup>27</sup> The methodical lifestyle exemplified by Wesley was held up as an example - 'Leisure and I have taken leave of one another', stated Wesley.<sup>28</sup>

There were however some departures from nonconformist thinking. The Methodists were staunch Arminians as opposed to the Calvinist dissenters, although the

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<sup>21</sup>J. & J. Comaroff, 'Colonization of Consciousness', p. 272.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 267.

<sup>23</sup>Bertram Hutchinson, 'Some Social Consequences of Nineteenth Century Missionary Activity among the South African Bantu', *Africa* 27 (1957), pp. 174-175; E.A. Ayandele, *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria 1842-1914* (London, 1966), p. 330. Elphick points out the parallels between the missionaries and modern revolutionary intelligentsias: 'Africans and the Christian Campaign', pp. 282-286.

<sup>24</sup>Although it was always Wesley's intention to remain within the Established Church, independence became inevitable and the Methodists officially broke away from the Church of England in 1784.

<sup>25</sup>Slee, 'Wesleyan Methodism', p. 17.

<sup>26</sup>The Methodists viewed themselves as missionaries wherever they were situated, be it among the English labouring classes or the heathen: *ibid.*, pp. 1, 14.

<sup>27</sup>Instructions to the Wesleyan Missionaries (henceforth Instructions), I and II.

<sup>28</sup>Pudney, John Wesley, p. 25.

free will versus predestination debate did not seem to have significant practical implications.<sup>29</sup> A more significant difference was political: while the Methodists were supporters of Toryism in the tradition of their founder, other nonconformist churches were political forces on the left.<sup>30</sup> This had important ramifications in the mission field and was the feature which most distinguished the Wesleyan Missionary Society from the London and Glasgow societies. Wesleyans were encouraged to submit to and cooperate with colonial authorities<sup>31</sup> and were explicitly directed not to concern themselves with the 'civil condition' of their listeners.<sup>32</sup> Hence they did not support the philanthropic causes of the London Society.<sup>33</sup>

The Wesleyan societies were also distinguished by their efficient organization. The church was grouped into societies and further into classes, which, due to the active participation of lay preachers, could function without salaried ministers. Although William Shaw was at first the only ordained Methodist in Albany, he was able to rely on lay assistants such as William Shepstone and John Ayliff.<sup>34</sup> This cell-like organization that utilized open air meetings or improvised church buildings was ideal for scattered

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<sup>29</sup>Best, 'Evangelicalism', p. 40.

<sup>30</sup>Hobsbawm, Age of Revolution, p. 278.

<sup>31</sup>Instructions (VI).

<sup>32</sup>Article VII (6) of the Instructions states: '...the Committee most strongly call(s) to your recollection...that your only business is to promote the moral and religious improvement of the persons to whom you may have access, without, in the least degree, in public or private, interfering with their civil condition.'

<sup>33</sup>The Glasgow Missionary Society initially supported John Philip while the Wesleyans did not: C.P. Groves, The Planting of Christianity in Africa, 4 vols. (London and Redhill, 1948), vol. 1, p. 257; cf. J.E. Carlyle, South Africa and Its Mission Fields (London, 1878), p. 181. However, the Scottish missionaries began to support the government and colonists at the time of the Sixth Frontier War: G.M. Theal, History of South Africa, 5 vols. (London, 1891), vol. 4, p. 34.

<sup>34</sup>William Eveleigh, The Settlers and Methodism 1820-1920 (Cape Town, 1920), pp. 41-43.

colonial communities with little money and contributed to making the Methodist Church the most influential religious body in southeastern Africa by 1835.<sup>35</sup>

Due to the sizable number of Methodists living in the Albany District in the 1820's, the Wesleyan missionaries developed a very close relationship with the settler community<sup>36</sup> unlike their London and Glasgow counterparts.<sup>37</sup> Shaw put great emphasis on establishing a strong settler church before beginning mission work,<sup>38</sup> for the Methodist settlers contributed substantial manpower and funding to Xhosaland stations.<sup>39</sup> It also caused the missionaries to remain emotionally and intellectually bound with these Europeans,<sup>40</sup> which reinforced their cultural prejudices. During the War of 1834-35, they aligned themselves with the colonists in Grahamstown in condemning the Xhosa invasion outright - 'A more wanton aggression upon a peaceable people, who were desirous of promoting their best interests, has never been committed', stated Shrewsbury, Young, and Haddy.<sup>41</sup> The relationship with the settlers was reciprocated, as reflected

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<sup>35</sup>Slee, 'Wesleyan Methodism', pp. 2, 18-20, 39.

<sup>36</sup>At the Silver Jubilee celebrations of the 1820 Settlers, Wesleyans like William Shaw, John Shepstone, and John Ayliff played a prominent part: John Ayliff, Memorials of the British Settlers of South Africa (Grahamstown, 1845). Slee postulates that the Wesleyans could therefore appreciate both the Xhosa and settler viewpoints: Slee, 'Wesleyan Methodism', p. 16. However, given that the missionaries shared the culture of the Europeans and lived among the settlers before beginning labours in Xhosaland, it is highly unlikely that the Wesleyans were neutral.

<sup>37</sup>The G.M.S. missionary Calderwood realized the advantages of such a close relationship: Caffres and Caffre Missions, pp. 18-19.

<sup>38</sup>Slee, 'Wesleyan Methodism', pp. 6, 13.

<sup>39</sup>Eveleigh, Settlers and Methodism, p. 54.

<sup>40</sup>Shrewsbury remarked that it was a comfort to behold 'England in miniature' in Grahamstown: Shrewsbury Journal, 13 November 1826.

<sup>41</sup>W.M.S., Shrewsbury, Young, and Richard Haddy to Secretaries, 1 January 1835. The Wesleyans consistently blamed the Xhosa for the outbreak of war: Shrewsbury to Secretaries, 10 April 1835; Ayliff to Secretaries, 12 June 1835; cf. A.E.G. Duff, 'An Analysis of Wesleyan Missionary Strategy in the Eastern Districts of the Cape Colony and "Caffreland" between 1823 and 1838' (Rhodes University, M.A. thesis, 1969), p. 67.

in the extensive coverage given to Wesleyan meetings and correspondence in the Graham's Town Journal to 1835<sup>42</sup> and in the honour shown especially to William Shaw,<sup>43</sup> who was characterized by his 'meekness' as opposed to the 'restless course of a wrangling politician' of John Philip.<sup>44</sup>

The Wesleyans were given permission to enter Xhosaland on the condition that they assist the government in almost every sphere.<sup>45</sup> This they did, maintaining positive relationships with both Lt.-Col. Somerset and Sir Benjamin D'Urban.<sup>46</sup> They were actively involved in mediating between the Xhosa and the Colony in 1835<sup>47</sup> in the realization that peace was beneficial to the spread of the Gospel. They did not hesitate to make their political views known to the government, for as Richard Haddy observed,

I would not make these observations on what may be considered political subjects were we not as missionaries so seriously affected by them; and did they not involve the present destinies of our missions and directly influence our own perculiar [sic] work.<sup>48</sup>

Both Shrewsbury and Boyce wrote letters to D'Urban giving their recommendations for the future frontier policy, the measures they advocated including a pass system and the

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<sup>42</sup>See, for example, Graham's Town Journal, 20 July 1832, 14 February 1833, 14 November 1833, 2 January 1834, 13 February 1834, 15 May 1834, 23 January 1835, etc. The editor of the journal was the Methodist Robert Godlonton, which no doubt contributed to the Wesleyan coverage during this period.

<sup>43</sup>Shaw was presented with a gift from the Albany settlers in appreciation for 'promoting the cause of religious and civil improvement': Graham's Town Journal, 7 March 1833.

<sup>44</sup>Graham's Town Journal, 7 February 1833.

<sup>45</sup>Colonial Secretary to Shaw, 6 June 1823, cited in Duff, 'Wesleyan Strategy', p. 62.

<sup>46</sup>The Wesleyans publicly presented Somerset with a Bible: Graham's Town Journal, 20 July 1832. Shrewsbury spoke highly of D'Urban: William J. Shrewsbury, Christ Glorified in the Life, Experience, and Character of Joseph B. Shrewsbury, 4th ed. (London, n.d.), p. 19.

<sup>47</sup>Duff, 'Wesleyan Strategy', p. 95.

<sup>48</sup>Haddy to Secretaries, 14 October 1836, cited in Duff, 'Wesleyan Strategy', p. 54.

settlement of the ceded territory by settlers.<sup>49</sup> Shaw summed up the overall Wesleyan view when he blamed the war on

the moral state and predatory habits of the Caffres, the evil tendencies of which have been aggravated by the exceedingly mischievous tendency of our border policy.<sup>50</sup>

While it is not clear whether or not all the Wesleyans supported the expulsion of the Xhosa over the Kei, they did seek an extension of colonial control over the Xhosa.<sup>51</sup>

The close relationship of the Wesleyans with the colonial authorities was another point of contrast with the London and Glasgow Missionary Societies. The Wesleyans openly attributed blame for the Sixth Frontier War to the Xhosa whereas the G.M.S. did not.<sup>52</sup> The Colonial Secretary in Britain consequently criticized the W.M.S. but not the L.M.S. or G.M.S.; Sir Benjamin D'Urban and Sir Harry Smith, on the other hand, reflected settler opinion in praising the Methodists.<sup>53</sup> Whatever official policies may have been espoused by the respective societies, however, individual missionaries often disagreed with them.<sup>54</sup> This is the case with the L.M.S., where James Read was often

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<sup>49</sup>Boyce to D'Urban, 31 March 1834 (MIC 408/1, microfilm copies in Cory Library of W.M.S. records in London); W.M.S., Shrewsbury to Secretaries, 24 December 1835. In a later letter to D'Urban, Boyce recommended that clanship be destroyed among the Xhosa and that the chiefs' judicial powers be eliminated: Boyce to D'Urban, 12 October 1835, cited in Duff, 'Wesleyan Strategy', p. 98. Boyce elaborates on his political views, which he believes 'accord generally with those entertained by...the Wesleyan Missionaries in South Africa', in his Notes on South-African Affairs (London, 1839). He sides firmly with D'Urban and the colonists.

<sup>50</sup>Shaw to Earl of Aberdeen, 7 April 1835, cited in Duff, 'Wesleyan Strategy', pp. 69-73.

<sup>51</sup>Duff examines Wesleyan political views in the 1830's in his thesis, 'Wesleyan Strategy', pp. 31, 36, 69-90.

<sup>52</sup>Graham's Town Journal, letter from W. Chalmers, J. Ross, J. Laing, and A. M'Diarmid, 3 July 1835.

<sup>53</sup>Slee, 'Wesleyan Methodism', pp. 51-57. D'Urban and Smith appreciated the Wesleyans for their practical value as instruments of their policy.

<sup>54</sup>Social reforms in Britain were not necessarily supported by all evangelicals: Best, 'Evangelicalism', p. 51. Many of them therefore opposed John Philip: Andrew Ross,

at odds with his colleagues<sup>55</sup> and apparently James Laing (G.M.S.) and John Brownlee (L.M.S.) privately agreed with the Wesleyans in blaming the war on the Xhosa.<sup>56</sup>

Although these distinctions set the Wesleyans apart, there was some mutual support amongst the Wesleyan, London, and Glasgow societies.<sup>57</sup> The Wesleyan correspondence rarely presents the other societies in a negative light,<sup>58</sup> with the only major public confrontation occurring between John Philip and William Shaw, the former of whom accused the Wesleyans of supporting the commando system in Xhosaland.<sup>59</sup> Shaw is on record as having publicly donated money to the L.M.S.<sup>60</sup> and it was customary for missionaries to address the annual meetings of the other societies.<sup>61</sup> Their spheres of labour were not in competition, yet there was no close cooperation between these organizations<sup>62</sup> save for the translation work.<sup>63</sup>

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John Philip (Aberdeen, 1986), p. 4.

<sup>55</sup>B.A. le Cordeur and C.C. Saunders, eds., The Kitchingman Papers (Johannesburg, 1976), p. 24; Shaw to Boyce, 1 November 1844, MS 15,590, Cory Library.

<sup>56</sup>Slee, 'Wesleyan Methodism', pp. 66-67.

<sup>57</sup>According to Moodie, Backhouse, and Walker, the societies were in competition and often spoke negatively of each other. This is not reflected in the Wesleyan correspondence, although they may have suppressed their views in writing to their home office: Moodie, Ten Years, vol. 2, pp. 281-282; George Washington Walker and James Backhouse, Observations Submitted in Brotherly Love to the Missionaries and Other Gospel Labourers in South Africa (Cape Town, 1840), pp. 13-14.

<sup>58</sup>Shrewsbury makes one reference to the 'better system and sounder doctrine' of the Wesleyans as compared with the 'Calvinists': Shrewsbury Journal, 12 December 1826.

<sup>59</sup>Shaw launched a vociferous attack on this allegation and Philip's views on border policy in his publication, A Defence of the Wesleyan Missionaries in Southern Africa (London, 1839).

<sup>60</sup>Graham's Town Journal, 10 August 1832.

<sup>61</sup>See the Graham's Town Journal for 1 May 1835, when Shrewsbury, Boyce, and Shepstone addressed the L.M.S. meeting; James Laing of the G.M.S. addressed the W.M.S. meeting in March: *ibid.*, 27 March 1835.

<sup>62</sup>Du Plessis, History of Christian Missions, p. 258.

<sup>63</sup>Shaw, My Mission, p. 291; Slee, 'Wesleyan Methodism', p. 120.

In considering the various societies, it is important to stress that despite the differences in political matters, the Xhosaland missionaries at this time had similar evangelical roots. Strategies may have differed, as with the Presbyterian G.M.S. putting great emphasis on education and the W.M.S. on expansion, but the message they preached to Africans was the same in the evangelical distinctions described above. African response to the Gospel was also minimal at stations of other societies: after the first decade of labour in Xhosaland, the Glasgow Missionary Society had altogether 39 'communicants' (church members) at four stations<sup>64</sup> while the Wesleyans had 142 Society members (of which approximately 24 were Europeans) at six stations.<sup>65</sup> As the following pages will show, European traveller and resident accounts, such as those of Harriet Ward, Dunbar Moodie, and Andrew Steedman, confirm the similarities in message, station life, and African perceptions of and response to the Gospel at the stations throughout Xhosaland. Although this study is limited to the Wesleyans, then, it is probable that African perceptions at other stations among Xhosa-speaking peoples did not differ markedly.

The first station started by the Wesleyans in Caffraria was Wesleyville in 1823. William Shaw commenced work among the Gqunukhwebe, a clan of the Xhosa of mixed Khoikhoi and Xhosa ancestry. Shaw had a dream of establishing a 'chain of stations' from Wesleyville to Delagoa Bay and furthered it in 1825 by founding Mount Coke. This institution was situated in the midst of the Ndlambe and was initially headed by Stephen Kay. In accordance with the Wesleyan policy of frequently transferring

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<sup>64</sup>R. Godlonton, Narrative of the Irruption of the Kafir Hordes (Grahamstown, 1836), p. 248.

<sup>65</sup>W.M.S., Minutes of Meeting - Albany District, February 1834.

personnel,<sup>66</sup> Kay was replaced by Samuel Young from 1827-29, when Young was relocated to Wesleyville; Shrewsbury then took over the work at Mount Coke until 1833. Butterworth, established in 1827 among Hintsa's people, was first led by Shrewsbury. After two and a half years he was similarly replaced by Stephen Kay in 1830, and Shrewsbury was sent to Mount Coke. Kay's sojourn at Butterworth was cut short by his return to England, with John Ayliff taking his place in 1830. Shrewsbury, Kay, Young and Ayliff thus played pivotal roles in the initial years of evangelization at Mount Coke and Butterworth. In order to understand the records they left, it is necessary to examine the men themselves.

William Shrewsbury was born of a large, poor family. Due to family circumstances, he was unable to continue his schooling at the age of ten. His diligent self-study amply compensated for this shortcoming, which is reflected in his confident command of the English language.<sup>67</sup> After being a lay preacher for a short while, he was sent to the West Indies in 1815 by the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society. There he aroused the animosity of the settlers due to his opposition to slavery and concubinage, having to flee Barbados for his life.<sup>68</sup> No doubt his blunt and forthright manner repeatedly aroused antagonism, a character trait that was to create controversy

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<sup>66</sup>D.G.L. Cragg, 'The Relations of the Amampondo and the Colonial Authorities (1830-1886) with Special Reference to the Role of the Wesleyan Missionaries' (Oxford, D.Phil. thesis, 1959), p. 24. Backhouse correctly noted that this practice, common among other mission societies, was detrimental to mission work as missionaries were often transferred soon after they had learned the language and gained the confidence of the people: Narrative, p. 282.

<sup>67</sup>Shrewsbury read one book a week while in Xhosaland and became fully conversant in Hebrew: Shrewsbury Journal, 31 December 1827 & 31 December 1829; B.E. Seton, 'Wesleyan Missions and the Sixth Frontier War, 1834-35' (University of Cape Town, Ph.D. thesis, 1962), p. 73.

<sup>68</sup>Minutes of the Methodist Conferences (henceforth Conference Minutes), 16 (123) 1866, p. 445. Shrewsbury may have been taking a page out of Wesley's book, for Wesley was also the target of settlers and mobs in Georgia and England respectively: Pudney, John Wesley, pp. 50, 77.

in Xhosaland and later in England.<sup>69</sup> He arrived in southern Africa in 1826 and, after the repeated illnesses of Shrewsbury and his family in Xhosaland, was transferred to Grahamstown in 1833<sup>70</sup> and returned to England in 1835.<sup>71</sup>

Before coming to Africa, then, Shrewsbury had amassed considerable cross-cultural experience and was aware of the importance of mastering Xhosa. He first learned Dutch upon arriving in southern Africa in 1826 and then in 1827 began his study of Xhosa.<sup>72</sup> He had a facility for acquiring languages: he was translating parts of the Bible by 1830,<sup>73</sup> but was still in need of an interpreter for preaching in 1831<sup>74</sup> and remarked that the Xhosa had problems understanding his 'imperfect Caffre'.<sup>75</sup> His correspondence indicates little interest in developing rapport with African people and an inability to do so because he had 'neither the knowledge for mankind nor discretion to govern his zeal'.<sup>76</sup>

Due to his disparaging assessment of Xhosa character<sup>77</sup> and his disappointment

<sup>69</sup>Shrewsbury, Memorials, pp. 422-430.

<sup>70</sup>W.M.S., Shrewsbury to Secretaries, 30 March 1833.

<sup>71</sup>W.M.S., Shrewsbury to Secretaries, 19 June 1835.

<sup>72</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 30 January 1827; J.V.B. Shrewsbury, Memorials, p. 245. He began his study of Xhosa five months before arriving in Butterworth.

<sup>73</sup>By 1835 he had translated the books of Genesis, Joel, James, Isaiah, and John: A.M. McGregor, Butterworth: First Christian Mission in Transkei, 1827-1977 (King William's Town, 1977), p. 3. Said Shrewsbury, 'I do not conceive the Translation will ever come perfect out of my hands: it will perhaps serve as scaffolding to some master-builder...': W.M.S., 15 December 1830 Shrewsbury journal extract, 31 December 1830; cf. *ibid.*, Shrewsbury to Secretaries, 30 September 1831.

<sup>74</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 9 January 1831. He preached his first sermon in Xhosa in September 1831: *ibid.*, 15 September 1831.

<sup>75</sup>W.M.S., 15 August 1832 Shrewsbury journal extract, 26 September 1832.

<sup>76</sup>Major W.B. Dundas to Sir Richard Bourke, 3 April 1827, cited in Williams, 'Missionaries', p. 62; cf. W.M.S., Shrewsbury to Secretaries, 29 March 1832.

<sup>77</sup>According to Shrewsbury, their thoughts were 'evil, only evil, and that continually': W.M.S., Shrewsbury to Secretaries, 31 March 1831.

and bitterness at the failure of his efforts,<sup>78</sup> he concluded that 'nothing next to the Gospel will so much benefit them as subjection...to our Government and Laws'.<sup>79</sup> He accordingly recommended to Benjamin D'Urban during the War of 1834-35 that all Xhosa have their land and cattle confiscated and that they be forced to wear tin plates around their necks indicating their chief and tribe.<sup>80</sup> Despite his harsh opinions, he was the 'most perspicacious of Kaffirland missionaries'.<sup>81</sup> Because he was aware of and revealed the resistance shown to the Gospel, his analysis of the work as well as his frequent comments on the response of people to the message provide extremely valuable insights into the reception of the Gospel among the Xhosa.

Samuel Young arrived in South Africa in 1822 and ministered to the Albany Settlers<sup>82</sup> before moving to Mount Coke in 1827. In the course of his term there, his wife and three of his four children died. When he left Mount Coke in 1827 to take up duties at Wesleyville, he was still heavily reliant upon his interpreter.<sup>83</sup> Young always tried to be positive in his outlook, a tendency which resulted in a lack of information regarding Xhosa resistance to the Gospel as well as an exaggeration (might one say misrepresentation?) of events. He claimed, for instance, to have at various times overhead Africans plotting his death while he slept close by: his linguistic ineptitude

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<sup>78</sup>W.M.S., Shrewsbury to Secretaries, 30 June 1832.

<sup>79</sup>W.M.S., Shrewsbury to Secretaries, 24 December 1835.

<sup>80</sup>W.M.S., Shrewsbury to Secretaries, 24 December 1835. The Society expressed its 'unqualified disapprobation' of Shrewsbury's advice, stating that it was 'contrary to the standing instructions...that he should interfere at all...in the discussion of questions of this nature': *ibid.*, extract from Minutes of the W.M.S. Committee Meeting, 10 December 1835.

<sup>81</sup>Williams, 'Missionaries', p. 37.

<sup>82</sup>Conference Minutes (1884), Young obituary, p. 31.

<sup>83</sup>Young, Missionary Narrative, pp. 42, 79, 103.

makes this an implausible tale.<sup>84</sup> He tended to accept the statements of chiefs at face value, not discerning their political motives for treating missionaries well. His book relating his experiences in Africa leaves the reader with an impression that most Africans had joyfully received the Gospel - an assertion not supported by his colleagues. He therefore does not leave a substantial amount of material on African culture or response, and what he has left must be treated with scepticism.

Stephen Kay arrived in southern Africa in 1820 as a settler and attempted to begin missionary work among the Bechuana (Tswana) in 1821.<sup>85</sup> After this mission was aborted, he ministered to the Albany settlers, slaves and Khoikhoi<sup>86</sup> before being assigned to Mount Coke in 1825. His struggles with spiritual as well as mission-related problems are revealed in his letters. He spoke openly of his 'unbelief',<sup>87</sup> a characteristic which caused him to come to an early conclusion that missionary work among the Xhosa was not progressing as expected.<sup>88</sup> His correspondence alternates between brief periods of euphoria and much longer intervals of despondency, offering vivid descriptions of the hardships he and his family faced.<sup>89</sup> Despite this adversity, Kay did not become bitter about missionary failure but rather advocated the cause of the Africans.<sup>90</sup> He was the

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<sup>84</sup>Young, Missionary Narrative, p. 43.

<sup>85</sup>Missionary Notices 71 (1821), p. 161.

<sup>86</sup>Wesleyan Reports (1822), p. lvii; Dictionary of South African Biography, vol. 4, C.J. Beyers, ed. (Durban, 1981), p. 270.

<sup>87</sup>W.M.S., 30 August 1825 Kay journal extract, 20 October 1825.

<sup>88</sup>W.M.S., Kay to Secretaries, 20 April 1826. After less than half a year at Mount Coke, Kay spoke of the 'numerous perplexities of my infant Station' where 'our progress is but slow'.

<sup>89</sup>W.M.S., 1 & 3 June 1830 Kay journal extracts, 21 June 1830.

<sup>90</sup>He consistently referred to the Xhosa as 'my sable audience' instead of the usual appellation of 'Caffre': Missionary Notices 142 (1827), 25 December 1827 Kay journal extract, p. 338; *ibid.* 143 (1827), 11 March 1827 Kay letter, p. 357; *ibid.* 173 (1830), 7 October 1829 Kay journal extract, p. 261.

only Wesleyan to present their case to the British public in his book, A Succinct Statement of the Kaffer's Case, in which he claimed that the Xhosa were treated unjustly by the colonial government.<sup>91</sup>

There are indications that Kay began learning Xhosa only upon arriving at his station and was, in 1830, still relying on an interpreter.<sup>92</sup> Nonetheless, he provided accurate information on Xhosa culture, as when he distinguished between the Great and Right-Hand Houses of the Xhosa<sup>93</sup> and gave a very exact description of the circumcision ritual.<sup>94</sup> He recorded many African responses to the Gospel, giving an evaluation very similar to Shrewsbury's and furnishing many glimpses into the labyrinth of African perceptions.

John Ayliff is the last of the four missionaries to be considered. He was converted at the age of 23 and arrived in South Africa in 1820 with the Albany Settlers, becoming a missionary assistant among the slaves, Khoikhoi, and Xhosa in 1825.<sup>95</sup> Before arriving at Butterworth in 1830 as a missionary, he had learned some Xhosa and Dutch while operating a store in Somerset East and ministering to slaves and Khoikhoi

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<sup>91</sup>The confiscation of their land, the commando system, and the disrespectful treatment of chiefs are the main examples he gives: Stephen Kay, A Succinct Statement of the Kaffer's Case (London, 1837), pp. 7, 13-14, 19, 24-33, 39-41. Not surprisingly Kay's book elicited a negative review in the Graham's Town Journal, 3 July 1834. His views evidently estranged him from his colleagues: Shaw referred to him only as 'Mr. K.' in My Mission, p. 216, whereas Shrewsbury and Ayliff were fully named and described; in addition, Shaw openly disagreed with some of the views expressed in Kay's Travels and Researches: Defence, p. 27; cf. Seton, 'Wesleyan Missions', p. 64.

<sup>92</sup>W.M.S., 31 May 1830 Kay journal extract, 31 May 1830.

<sup>93</sup>Kay, Travels, pp. 149-152.

<sup>94</sup>W.M.S., 23 April 1830 Kay journal extract, 28 April 1830.

<sup>95</sup>L.A. Hewson, ed., Studies of Missionaries and Missionary Institutions, Series 2 (Grahamstown, 1955), p. 2.

in Grahamstown.<sup>96</sup> Due to his ties with the settlers, he became 'closely identified with the settler community by kinship and sympathy'.<sup>97</sup> It was due to these vested interests that he sided with the colonists in their disputes with the Xhosa, as he makes clear:

...as the former inhabitants of this part of the world had not answered the purpose for which infinite Goodness and Wisdom had given them this land as their habitation, He appointed another people, speaking another language, to succeed them, planting them in this land, and giving them Albany for a possession.<sup>98</sup>

Consequently, Ayliff became more politically involved at his station than his predecessors.<sup>99</sup> He encouraged the Mfengu to live close to the station which led to charges by Hintsa that he was 'attaching [sic] the people to the station for the purpose of forming a party against Hintza'.<sup>100</sup> He subsequently took up the cause of the Mfengu and was instrumental in settling them on lands confiscated from the Xhosa. He recorded their history<sup>101</sup> and was associated with them later at Haslope Hills and Healdtown.<sup>102</sup> Ayliff's correspondence is thus dominated by political considerations at Butterworth, although he does contribute some valuable insights into African response.

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<sup>96</sup>Dictionary of South African Biography, vol. 1, W.J. de Kock, ed. (Bloemfontein, 1968), p. 29.

<sup>97</sup>L.A. Hewson and F.G. van der Riet, The Journal of 'Harry Hastings' (Grahamstown, 1963), p. 15. Five of his sons were prominent in public service.

<sup>98</sup>Ayliff, Memorials, p. 10. He further remarks that 'though the natives have injured us, we have not injured them at all': *ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>99</sup>He preached on 'their souls' eternal interests and the importance of protecting the traders who were trading in this part of the country': W.M.S., 10 April 1833 Ayliff journal extract, 18 September 1833.

<sup>100</sup>W.M.S., 18 November 1833 Ayliff journal extract, 12 June 1835.

<sup>101</sup>J. Whiteside and John Ayliff, History of the Abambo, generally known as Fingos (Butterworth, 1912).

<sup>102</sup>L.A. Hewson, 'John Ayliff of Albany', Journal of the Methodist Historical Society of South Africa 2 (8) 1957, p. 183.



John Ayliff<sup>103</sup>



Stephen Kay<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>103</sup>Journal of the Methodist Historical Society 2 (8) 1957.

<sup>104</sup>Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine (November 1833).



William J. Shrewsbury<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>105</sup>Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine (May 1826).

Although he translated numerous books of the Bible,<sup>106</sup> he considered Xhosa to be a 'hard language' and was still using an interpreter after three years in Xhosaland.<sup>107</sup>

In addition to the above men, other missionaries frequently visited the stations to preach or offer moral support. William Shaw, John Davis, and James Whitworth (a former colleague of Shrewsbury's in the West Indies<sup>108</sup>) recorded their impressions which were, Shaw excepted, ill-informed on points of culture. Nevertheless, some of their correspondence is valuable in affirming the reports made by Shrewsbury, Young, Kay, and Ayliff.

It is noteworthy that of the four missionaries at Mount Coke and Butterworth, all but Ayliff had returned to England by 1835. For Shrewsbury, family illness was the main reason; for Kay and Young, it was probably connected with their lack of success in Xhosaland. These four Wesleyans shared a trait perhaps common to all Wesleyan missionaries: their motivation for taking the Gospel abroad was driven by a sense of obligation, which Shrewsbury revealed:

This morning at work, I reflected that though not one heathen should be converted by my ministry, to labour incessantly for their conversion would be as much my duty as if 3000 were pricked to the heart by one single discourse I might deliver.<sup>109</sup>

This theme was echoed by others such as Kay, who after preaching one day declared with relief that he had 'a conscious sense of having cleared my own soul of the blood of those who heard me'.<sup>110</sup> This was no doubt a powerful motivation, for Ayliff quotes

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<sup>106</sup>W.M.S., 15 August 1833 Ayliff journal extract, 30 December 1833; Hewson and van der Riet, 'Harry Hastings', p. 16.

<sup>107</sup>W.M.S., 31 August & 6 September 1833 Ayliff journal extracts, 30 December 1833.

<sup>108</sup>Wesleyan Reports (1823), p. 35.

<sup>109</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 12 February 1827.

<sup>110</sup>W.M.S., 13 February 1825 Kay journal extract, April 1825; cf. Ayliff Journal, 1 October 1830; Shrewsbury Journal, 19 July 1829. This is most probably drawn from an Old Testament passage in Ezekiel 3:18: '[if] you do not warn him or speak out to

a 'Dr. A. Clarke' in his journal as saying, 'he who neglects to save life, when it is in his power to do it, is a murderer as well as he who voilently [sic] takes it away'.<sup>111</sup>

Another aspect of the Wesleyans' character was their tremendous commitment to the task of evangelization. They suffered through isolation, anxieties, dangers, and separation from family and friends.<sup>112</sup> The demands and physical discomforts that their work entailed frequently resulted in poor health.<sup>113</sup> Shrewsbury is a case in point. Due to exposure to damp conditions at Butterworth in her first year there, Hilaria Shrewsbury succumbed to rheumatic fever.<sup>114</sup> While she was completely crippled by the disease, her husband and seven children were afflicted with fever, causing Shrewsbury to be confined to bed for three months at a time.<sup>115</sup> His daughter Julia was incarcerated in a mental institution in England due to a lack of medical help when she was severely burned by fire at Butterworth.<sup>116</sup> It was due to these illnesses that Shrewsbury returned to England, although his wife died before his departure.

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dissuade him from his evil ways in order to save his life, that wicked man will die for his sin, and I will hold you accountable for his blood'. It was probably also a motivating factor for missionaries of other societies: Monica Wilson, Missionaries: Conquerors or Servants of God? (King William's Town, 1976), pp. 7-8.

<sup>111</sup>Ayliff Journal, third to last page. They may have been influenced by John Wesley, who treated his prison ministry as a campaign for personal holiness, not social improvement: Pudney, John Wesley, p. 35.

<sup>112</sup>Williams, 'Missionaries', pp. 54-60.

<sup>113</sup>Ibid., pp. 88-89. Missionary wives were particularly vulnerable: between 1825-35, four missionary wives died while their husbands lived: see Shrewsbury Journal, 19 July 1833 (Mrs. Shepstone) & 13 June 1835 (Mrs. Shrewsbury); Graham's Town Journal, 14 February 1833 (Mrs. Satchell); W.M.S., 5 March 1830 Young journal extract, 10 June 1830 (Mrs. Young).

<sup>114</sup>For a moving account of the incredible sufferings endured by a missionary wife, see 'Memoir of Mrs. Hilaria Shrewsbury by W.J. Shrewsbury', Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine (July 1838), pp. 481-488.

<sup>115</sup>W.M.S., Shrewsbury to Secretaries, 30 June 1832, 22 July & 23 September 1834.

<sup>116</sup>Shrewsbury to Dugmore, 26 September 1848 (MS 1177, Cory Library).

On the whole, then, the pioneer Wesleyans possessed commitment and burning conviction.<sup>117</sup> They had little education,<sup>118</sup> with lay preaching experience, piety, and good health being the main criteria for missionary selection.<sup>119</sup> Their character and background was to have a profound influence on their interaction with the Africans they sought to convert.

### Strategy and Progress at Mount Coke and Butterworth

The first organized missionary effort in South Africa began in 1737. The Moravians sent a missionary to the Khoikhoi but were forced to withdraw due to the desire of the Dutch Reformed Church to retain its religious monopoly of the Cape.<sup>120</sup> They renewed their efforts at Genadendal in 1792 and were successful in winning the support of settlers and administration alike,<sup>121</sup> and in gathering their converts on the mission station established the model later emulated by Xhosaland missionaries.<sup>122</sup> Aside from the brief attempts of van der Kemp and Joseph Williams to begin work among the Ngqika, the London Missionary Society concentrated its initial efforts on the Griqua, the Koranna, and the Bechuana (Tswana). It was in 1820-21 that John Brownlee and W.R. Thomson attempted unsuccessfully to serve as both government

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<sup>117</sup>Cf. Warren, Social History, pp. 54-55.

<sup>118</sup>The early Methodist missionaries in Natal similarly lacked university training: Etherington, Preachers, p. 29. The early London Society evangelists were also poorly educated, van der Kemp excepted: du Plessis, History of Christian Missions, p. 118.

<sup>119</sup>Williams, 'Missionaries', pp. 35-36.

<sup>120</sup>Du Plessis, History of Christian Missions, p. 59.

<sup>121</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 82, 257.

<sup>122</sup>Elphick, 'Africans and the Christian Campaign', pp. 286-288.

agents and missionaries at Gwali among the Ngqika.<sup>123</sup> A more lasting effort among these people was established by the Glasgow Missionary Society<sup>124</sup> at Lovedale in 1824.<sup>125</sup>

The most ambitious extension of missionary endeavours in Xhosaland was undertaken by William Shaw in 1823. The only ordained minister to arrive with the British settlers in 1820,<sup>126</sup> Shaw was instrumental in founding a chain of six stations within seven years among Xhosa-speaking peoples: Wesleyville (Gqunukhwebe), Mount Coke (Xhosa), Butterworth (Xhosa), Morley (Mpondo), Clarkebury (Thembu), and Buntingville (Mpondo). Although the Moravians began work among the Thembu in 1828 and the Berlin Missionary Society among the Xhosa in 1836, the Wesleyan, Glasgow, and London Missionary Societies had the most missionaries and influence in Xhosaland during the period under study.

Before Mount Coke or Butterworth were established, guidelines were elucidated as to the strategy to be followed. In this respect much preparatory work had been done: not only had the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society been active on other continents, but it had already learned from the experiences of William Shaw, who had been at Wesleyville since 1823.

The pattern begun at Wesleyville was fairly simple and was duplicated at

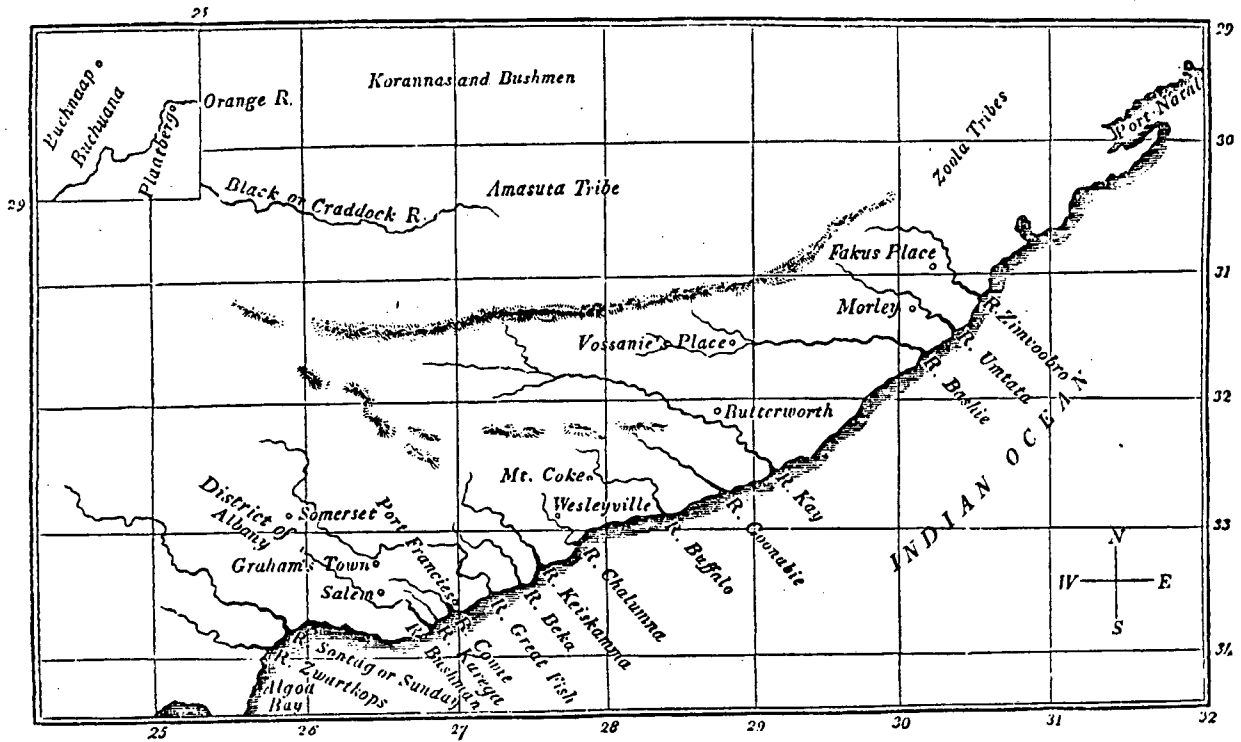
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<sup>123</sup>The venture was abandoned when the work was obstructed and their lives endangered by their status as government agents: J. Whiteside, History of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in South Africa (Cape Town, 1906), p. 170. Brownlee established a station for the London Missionary Society at the Buffalo River in 1826 among the Ngqika, while Thomson moved to the Glasgow Missionary Society station at Kat River to minister to Khoikhoi and 'free coloured persons': Robert Godlonton, Narrative of the Irruption of the Kafir Hordes (Grahamstown, 1836), pp. 246-247.

<sup>124</sup>The G.M.S. became the Free Church of Scotland ('Scottish') Missionary Society 20 years later.

<sup>125</sup>Godlonton, Irruption, pp. 245-246.

<sup>126</sup>McGregor, Butterworth, p. 5.



'Sketch of the Mission Stations in Caffraria'<sup>127</sup>

Figure 2

<sup>127</sup>Papers Relative to the Wesleyan Missions (December 1831).

subsequent stations. The missionary was to select a site for the station which satisfied three specifications: it had to have arable land and access to ample water and timber,<sup>128</sup> which reflected the intention to make the station a farm community. Once settled, the missionary was to set about the task of evangelization, which included regular rounds of women's and catechumen classes, preaching, prayer meetings, sabbath services, and itineration.<sup>129</sup> The overall strategy was clearly defined at a Special District Meeting in 1825 at which a decision was taken to establish Mount Coke:

2. That the Missionary endeavour to collect such people around him as may be disposed to reside on the Mission Village, with a view to their being more fully instructed in the principles of Christ. 3. In order to the promotion [sic] of industry and civilized habits, these people shall be urged to build for themselves decent cottages, be employed in the public works of the Institution, and in such other ways as shall tend to their future support and future comfort. 4. That Day and Sunday Schools shall be established as soon as may be, in which the scholars shall be taught to read the Caffre language and English when practicable. 5. That the Missionaries shall itinerate amongst the natives in the neighbourhood of their respective Stations as much as circumstances will allow.<sup>130</sup>

These instructions were in practice followed very closely at Butterworth and Mount Coke.

In order to 'collect people around him', the missionary attempted to locate the station close to the chief's residence or to persuade the chief to move there, as in Ndlambe's case. If a chief were close by, the people would be more densely concentrated in the vicinity of the station,<sup>131</sup> thus facilitating itineration, education, and frequent communication with the chief. Choosing the site of the station was a cooperative effort between Society and chief, since the Wesleyans needed the chief's

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<sup>128</sup>These requirements applied also to stations of other missionary societies: Williams, 'Missionaries', p. 65.

<sup>129</sup>Ayliff Journal, 29 September 1833.

<sup>130</sup>W.M.S., Minutes of Special District Meeting at Wesleyville, 30 June - 8 July 1825.

<sup>131</sup>W.M.S., 4 July 1825 Kay journal extract, July 1825: 'knowing that where the Chief is, there also will a considerable number of the people always be'.

approval of the site and wished also to be on good terms with him at the outset.<sup>132</sup>

There were many 'temporal affairs' to be looked after on the station, such as supervision of construction and gardening work. Since the missionary was supposed to be unimpeded in his task of evangelization, a 'mechanic missionary', who also functioned as catechist, was engaged to see to these matters. Richard Tainton was one such lay assistant who was transferred from station to station to erect the necessary buildings: he helped found Mount Coke, then Butterworth, and finally Buntingville.<sup>133</sup> These artisans were supplemented by Methodists who ran the station stores, such as Robert Rawlins, who was schoolmaster and superintendent of the store at Butterworth and helped the resident missionary with itinerant preaching.<sup>134</sup> The ability of the W.M.S. to draw on its settler constituency to help in such practical and spiritual affairs was a great organizational asset of the Wesleyans.

In addition to lay assistants, each evangelist was helped by an 'assistant missionary'. All the Wesleyan missionaries embarked upon their careers in this capacity. William Shepstone,<sup>135</sup> for example, was a missionary assistant at Wesleyville, Mount Coke and Butterworth before establishing a station at Morley.<sup>136</sup> Thomas Jenkins was also intimately involved as missionary assistant at Butterworth, although he is only given

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<sup>132</sup>W.M.S., 1 October 1825 Kay journal extract, 20 October 1825. Kay stated that the site should be 'adapted to our own purpose, as well as the wishes of the people.'

<sup>133</sup>Whiteside, Methodist Church, p. 182; Shaw, Journal, 19 May 1827 extract, p. 76; J.A. Walker, 'A Study of Certain Aspects of the Mount Coke Missionary Institution' (Rhodes University, B.Div. thesis, 1954), p. 20; McGregor, Butterworth, p. 2; Cragg, 'Amampondo', p. 23.

<sup>134</sup>Ayliff Journal, 25 June 1832 & 14 April 1833; Graham's Town Journal, Robert Rawlins letter, 24 July 1834.

<sup>135</sup>Father of Theophilus Shepstone, who became fluent in Xhosa due to growing up in Xhosaland.

<sup>136</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 19 February 1828; Shaw, Journal, 30 June 1827 extract, p. 81; Eveleigh, Settlers and Methodism, p. 67.

passing mention.<sup>137</sup> The role of these men in the African and mission communities is rarely described as they did not regularly correspond with the Society and were seldom mentioned in missionary correspondence.

In addition to these two or three European families, a number of other families helped to found the villages. Their origins were not always given, but they were usually of Khoikhoi origin<sup>138</sup> and formed the initial congregation at the stations. At the founding of Wesleyville, for example, the two waggon-drivers, interpreter, and their wives were from the colony.<sup>139</sup> The references to large and responsive congregations must therefore be seen in the light of this established group of people with previous exposure to Christianity.

Before setting out to evangelize the Xhosa at Mount Coke, the Wesleyans were very optimistic as to future results. James Whitworth stated that the task presented 'prospects of security and success'<sup>140</sup>, Samuel Young believed the field was 'white already to harvest',<sup>141</sup> while Shaw even more confidently remarked, 'there is not so much risque [sic] of disappointment here, as in some of those distant regions.'<sup>142</sup> This certainty stemmed from the circumstance that mission work among the Xhosa had in the past been brief (van der Kemp for sixteen months in 1799-1800 and Joseph Williams for

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<sup>137</sup>Wesleyan Reports (1831), Butterworth Report, p. 55; Shrewsbury Journal, 13 September 1829; Ayliff Journal, 6 October 1830.

<sup>138</sup>Williams, 'Missionaries', p. 261.

<sup>139</sup>Shaw, My Mission, p. 96.

<sup>140</sup>W.M.S., 14 April 1825 Whitworth journal extract, April 1825.

<sup>141</sup>W.M.S., 29 June 1825 Young journal extract, 4 October 1825. Upon arriving at Mount Coke two years later, he was much less ebullient due probably to Kay's evaluation of the work, and stated, 'in such a barren desert as this part of the missionary field, we cannot expect to see fruit without considerable toil and labour': Missionary Notices 149 (1828), Young letter, 16 September 1827, p. 458.

<sup>142</sup>W.M.S., Shaw to Secretaries, 16 June 1825; cf. Wesleyan Reports (1824), p. 44.

two years, 1816-1818) and had only recently been recommenced.

Stephen Kay settled into Mount Coke in October 1825. Ndlambe's illness prevented the chief from moving to the station, as promised, which discouraged his people from doing so.<sup>143</sup> As a result, Kay was frustrated by the scarcity of listeners at the station who were 'not numerous'.<sup>144</sup> By October 1826 he reported that attendance at Sunday services had risen due to the number of people drifting into the area<sup>145</sup> but he did not indicate the overall response to his efforts. When Samuel Young assumed Kay's duties in April 1827, he also noted that many more kraals were springing up around Mount Coke<sup>146</sup> and the following years saw better attendance at services.<sup>147</sup> However, the thinly populated nature of the area around Mount Coke continued to be a major problem in later years.<sup>148</sup>

Initially enthusiastic about the response he witnessed, Young was by October 1828 reporting that the people were only 'more or less interested in the word preached'.<sup>149</sup> He subsequently experienced problems in gathering people to hear the message during itineration<sup>150</sup> and was told at one kraal that it would be better if he

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<sup>143</sup>W.M.S., Kay to Secretaries, 20 April 1826.

<sup>144</sup>W.M.S., 19 February 1826 Kay journal extract, 1 April 1826. This was also partially due to activities such as reaping and hunting which interfered with regular attendance of services: Wesleyan Reports (1826), 20 March 1826 Kay journal extract, p. 40.

<sup>145</sup>W.M.S., 1 October 1826 Kay journal extract, January 1827.

<sup>146</sup>W.M.S., Young to Secretaries, 10 January 1828.

<sup>147</sup>Wesleyan Reports (1828), Mount Coke Report, p. 62; *ibid.*, (1829), p. 34; *ibid.*, (1830), p. 45.

<sup>148</sup>W.M.S., Shrewsbury to Secretaries, 30 September 1831.

<sup>149</sup>W.M.S., Young to Secretaries, 1 January 1829.

<sup>150</sup>W.M.S., 15 November 1829 Young journal extract, 5 January 1830.

preached at another place where the people would be 'grieved' if he did not come.<sup>151</sup> This trend continued when Shrewsbury was transferred to Mount Coke in 1830, with the missionary remarking that it was almost impossible to avoid sinking into discouragement and despair.<sup>152</sup> 'Mount Coke,' he stated, 'I consider to be the least promising of all our stations in Caffreland.'<sup>153</sup> His pessimism was probably the reason for Shaw's recommendation that he remove to the colony, where he was 'likely to be of much greater service...than by his continuance in Kaffirland'.<sup>154</sup> H.H. Dugmore replaced Shrewsbury in 1833, but due to his provisional status he sent only one report, covering the years 1833-34, to London.<sup>155</sup>

Correspondence for this period alternates between reports of 'overflowing congregations' as well as poorly attended services. There is no doubt that initially many services were filled to capacity: the missionaries and their message were a novelty and curiosity needed to be satisfied.<sup>156</sup> Aside from this initial enthusiasm, the correspondence consistently indicates that the sparse population and indifferent and/or contemptuous attitude of the people<sup>157</sup> presented disheartening prospects. Over the

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<sup>151</sup>W.M.S., 18 December 1829 Young journal extract, 5 January 1830.

<sup>152</sup>W.M.S., Shrewsbury to Secretaries, 30 September 1830, 31 March 1831 & 30 June 1832; Shrewsbury Journal, 9 January 1831 & 8 April 1832. Shrewsbury's journal entries during his stay at Mount Coke were very sparse; this probably reflected his discouragement as well as the stress of his wife's illness.

<sup>153</sup>W.M.S., Shrewsbury to Secretaries, 30 June 1831.

<sup>154</sup>W.M.S., Shaw to Secretaries, 2 March 1832.

<sup>155</sup>W.M.S., Dugmore to Secretaries, 20 June 1834.

<sup>156</sup>'Numbers visit us daily,' remarked Kay after his arrival at Mount Coke: W.M.S., 15 October 1825 Kay journal extract, 20 October 1825; cf. Shaw, My Mission, pp. 102-103; Williams, 'Missionaries', p. 227; Etherington, Preachers, p. 47.

<sup>157</sup>On itineration, Shrewsbury experienced a 'mixture of neglect and contempt': W.M.S., Shrewsbury to Secretaries, 26 September 1832; cf. Shrewsbury Journal, 13-17 August 1832.

years little progress was evident, with the congregation averaging 70-80 people,<sup>158</sup> most of whom were station residents.<sup>159</sup> After ten years of labour at Mount Coke, only twelve people had been baptized of which seven had moved to the colony, two had been excluded, and one had died.<sup>160</sup>

The relationship that Young and Kay established between missionary and chiefs was one of cooperation and even warmth at Mount Coke. The period was characterized by the willingness of the chiefs to resolve any problems the missionaries had, particularly those respecting the theft of mission cattle and other property. In 1826, two horses stolen from the colony were found and returned and likewise two stolen mission oxen.<sup>161</sup> This pattern repeated itself in the ensuing years, with most stolen goods returned.<sup>162</sup> It was only after Mdushane died that his sons were unable to control thefts.<sup>163</sup> Such were relations between chief and station that when rumours of an impending Xhosa attack on the colony were circulating in 1829, Young confidently believed that these were completely unfounded and went to the colony with Shaw to communicate this to the authorities.<sup>164</sup>

The main reason for this positive climate was Ndlambe's eagerness to improve

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<sup>158</sup>Wesleyan Reports (1833), Mount Coke Report, p. 53.

<sup>159</sup>By 1834 there were 90 station residents at Mount Coke yet only seven Society members: Wesleyan Reports (1835), Mount Coke report for 1834, pp. xx, 43.

<sup>160</sup>These figures were compiled from the W.M.S. correspondence of Kay, Young, Ayliff, and Shrewsbury, the W.M.S. Minutes of Meeting - Albany District, and Wesleyan Reports for the time period 1825-35.

<sup>161</sup>W.M.S., 2 January 1826 Kay journal extract, 18 February 1826; *ibid.*, 15 May 1826 Kay journal extract, 30 July 1826.

<sup>162</sup>For an example of the lengths to which Ndlambe went to apprehend thieves who stole mission property, see W.M.S., 1, 4, 6, 18 August 1826 Kay journal extracts, 25 August 1826.

<sup>163</sup>W.M.S., Young to Secretaries, 26 August 1829.

<sup>164</sup>W.M.S., Young to Secretaries, 12 November 1829.

his image with the colonial authorities. By the time William Shaw met Ndlambe to negotiate the establishment of a station, Ndlambe was an old man who had had many dealings with the colony. He was aware that his nephew and rival Ngqika was their ally and encouraged the colony in its mistrust of him. He therefore went out of his way to accommodate the missionaries and ensure that they were treated with respect by his people.<sup>165</sup>

The situation at Butterworth presents a significant contrast in terms of chief-missionary relations. The mission had a troublesome start, with Hintsá refusing to permit the missionaries to settle there until he had obtained the permission of Ngqika, Ndlambe, and Phato. Hintsá's strategy was, in Shaw's view,

to procure from the other chieftains and counsellors, a formal consent to this innovation in the established order of things...and thereby to shield himself from responsibility, should it hereafter at any time become a question...<sup>166</sup>

The other chiefs refused to sanction the mission, stating that Hintsá did not need their permission.<sup>167</sup>

Despite Hintsá's objections, Shrewsbury moved to Butterworth in May 1827. Hintsá moved 20 miles away to demonstrate his anger,<sup>168</sup> and his known disapproval caused the workmen at the fledgling station to abandon their work<sup>169</sup> and people

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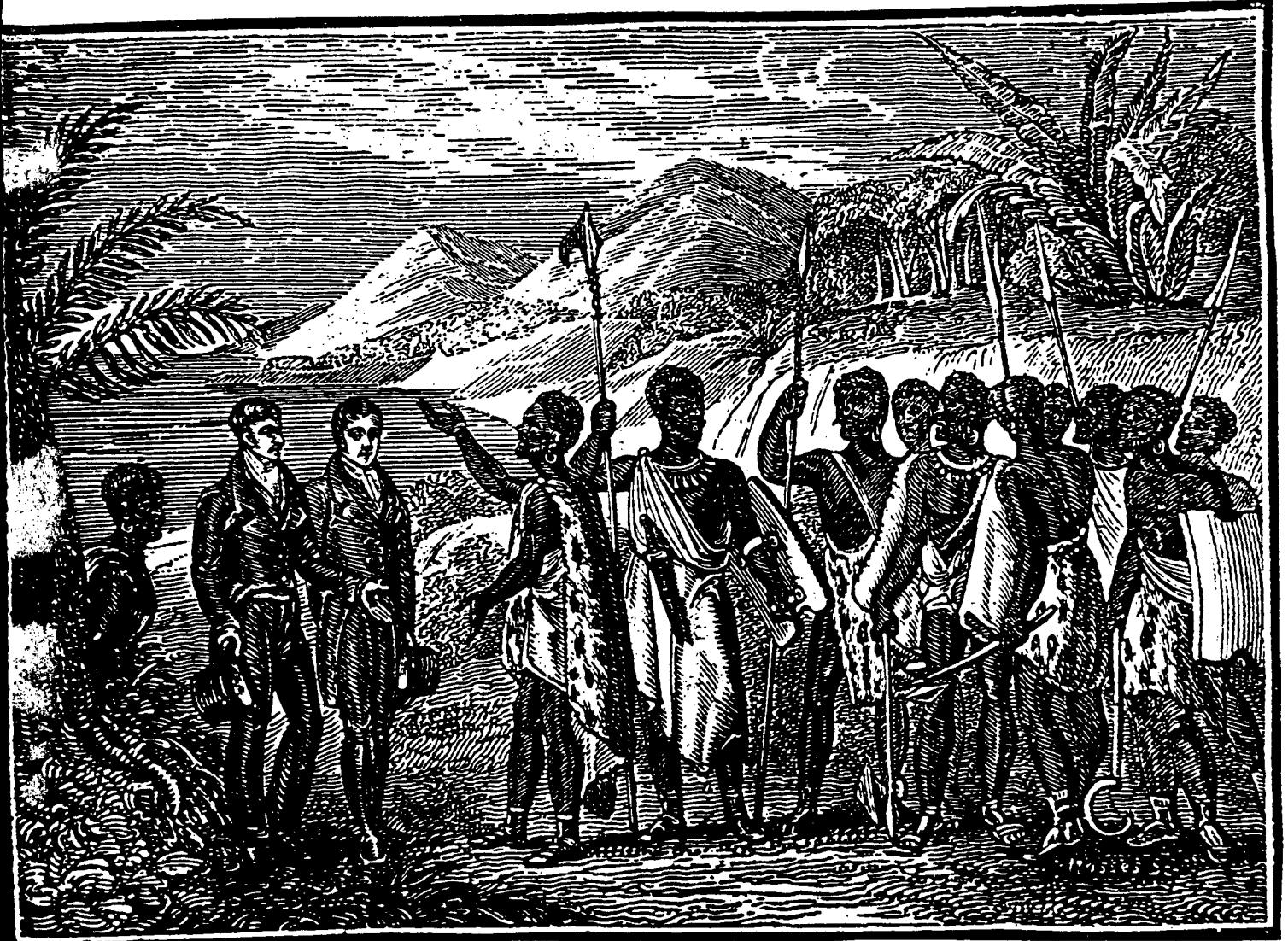
<sup>165</sup>At one wedding, Young was told that he could preach because he was "Slambie's son and 'Slambie's missionary': Young, Missionary Narrative, pp. 79-80. This comment occurs frequently in the Mount Coke correspondence.

<sup>166</sup>Wesleyan Reports (1827), 19 June 1827 Shaw letter, pp. 42-43; cf. Shrewsbury Journal, 16 June 1827. In the light of Hintsá's continuing mistrust of the missionaries, his behaviour indicates not so much his desire to avoid responsibility as much as his apprehensions regarding the ultimate aims and consequences of missionary endeavour.

<sup>167</sup>W.M.S., April 1827 Shaw journal extract, 4 February 1828. Ngqika apparently supported Shaw's theory that Hintsá was avoiding final responsibility: Shaw, Journal, 16 January & 12 May 1827 extracts, pp. 72, 75.

<sup>168</sup>W.M.S., Shrewsbury to Secretaries, 12 July 1827.

<sup>169</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 21 June 1827.



'The Rev. Mr. Shrewsbury's Interview with Hintsa and His Subordinate Chiefs'<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>170</sup>Cory Library for Historical Research, PIC 3,116.

attending a service to flee at Hints's approach.<sup>171</sup> It was only after months of threatened eviction that permission was at last given for the establishment of the station.<sup>172</sup>

Attendance at services followed the same pattern as that of Mount Coke, with some congregations being large and other groups being difficult to assemble while on itineration.<sup>173</sup> After two years, Shrewsbury reported that whereas before 'many were disposed to ridicule, or contend...now the people heard with almost universal seriousness and attention'<sup>174</sup> - a sign that curiosity had given way to indifference. By 1830, Kay reported with discouragement, 'nor do I recollect ever seeing a congregation less impressed by the sound of the Gospel'.<sup>175</sup> Ayliff echoed these sentiments in complaining of their 'awful apathy' and 'universal indifference',<sup>176</sup> but after 1832 attendance at both school and sabbath services steadily increased and there was 'encouraging proof that the Gospel was gaining some influence in the Tribe, particularly among the Fingoes'.<sup>177</sup> Figures on baptism demonstrate a significantly greater response at Butterworth than at Mount Coke: 35 people had been baptized after eight years of labour, of which ten had moved away, five had died, two had been excluded, and two had 'run away' to

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<sup>171</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 29 July 1827.

<sup>172</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 9 August 1827.

<sup>173</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 16 December 1827; W.M.S., Shrewsbury to Secretaries, 31 March 1828; *ibid.*, Ayliff to Secretaries, 29 July 1831.

<sup>174</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 25 August 1829. Shaw recorded the same trend around Wesleyville: *My Mission*, pp. 107-108.

<sup>175</sup>W.M.S., 4 July 1830 Kay journal extract, August 1830.

<sup>176</sup>Ayliff Journal, 31 October & 9 November 1830; W.M.S., Ayliff to Secretaries, 31 December 1832.

<sup>177</sup>W.M.S., Ayliff to Secretaries, 12 June 1835. Ayliff's journal entries indicated that services and schools were very well-attended in 1834 before the onset of hostilities: Ayliff Journal, 13 & 27 July, 7, 10 & 16 August, 3 September 1834.

Grahamstown.<sup>178</sup>

Unlike Ndlambe and Ngqika, Hintsá never showed any signs of interest in the Gospel and his conversion was 'at once desirable and difficult next to impossibility'.<sup>179</sup> Hintsá's mistrust was an enduring feature of his relationship with the mission, influenced no doubt by Boers who told him the missionaries were being used by the government to trap him.<sup>180</sup> Although he had had few direct dealings with the colony, he 'had evidently heard too much of white men, to be comfortable in their presence'.<sup>181</sup> Hintsá displayed his attitude toward the colony before the outbreak of hostilities in 1834 when he confiscated a trader's goods being transported by two Mfengu:

They then asked him what they were to say when they arrived at the [trading] station, he replied, 'oh! tell them that I took them; you need not hide it, for they have taken my country from me.'<sup>182</sup>

When asked by Shrewsbury to forward a government letter to Natal, he retorted that the missionary should do it himself.<sup>183</sup> He exhibited a demeanour of 'indifference and even contempt' when passing the station.<sup>184</sup> On attending a service, he refused to kneel during prayer unlike other chiefs.<sup>185</sup> He was constantly reproved by the missionaries for polygamy, witchcraft accusations, predatory raids, and 'profaning the sabbath'.<sup>186</sup> Kay

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<sup>178</sup>See note 160, p. 45 above for sources upon which these statistics are based.

<sup>179</sup>Shaw, Journal, 7 January 1827 extract, p. 68.

<sup>180</sup>Kay, Succinct Statement, p. 33.

<sup>181</sup>Rose, Four Years, p. 192.

<sup>182</sup>Graham's Town Journal, 16 July 1834 Robert Rawlins letter, 24 July 1834.

<sup>183</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 31 July 1827.

<sup>184</sup>W.M.S., 29 July 1827 Shrewsbury journal extract, 31 December 1827.

<sup>185</sup>W.M.S., 16 May 1830 Kay journal extract, 31 May 1830.

<sup>186</sup>W.M.S., 20 December 1829 Shrewsbury journal extract, 31 December 1829; Shrewsbury Journal, 22 February & 3 March 1828.

reported that he reacted by stalking off 'sneeringly'<sup>187</sup> and he consequently showed signs of deliberately avoiding the missionaries.<sup>188</sup>

Hintsa continued to be on outwardly friendly terms with the Wesleyans<sup>189</sup> until large numbers of people - most of whom were Mfengu<sup>190</sup> - either moved to the station or regularly attended services. Ayliff sensed that this was exciting animosity, stating that 'the great men of the tribe, from seeing the effect of the Gospel, are more and more becoming adversaries'.<sup>191</sup> This 'jealousy' was probably a suspicion that the Mfengu were beginning to become attached to the station and hence to the British cause.<sup>192</sup>

Hintsa's displeasure at this trend was manifested in various ways. When a trader was killed in 1834 and Mfengu despatched as messengers of the news to the colony, Hintsa confiscated their corn 'for favouring...the English'.<sup>193</sup> He manifested 'an angry disposition towards the people of the station'.<sup>194</sup> anyone interested in moving to the station or being baptized was threatened with death<sup>195</sup> and attendance at school was

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<sup>187</sup>W.M.S., 31 May 1830 Kay journal extract, 31 May 1830.

<sup>188</sup>For example, when his people were in a state of war with the Thembu, he moved 40 miles away from Butterworth to avoid being watched by the missionaries: W.M.S., Kay to Secretaries, 14 March 1830.

<sup>189</sup>Wesleyan Reports (1831), Butterworth Report, p. 55; Ayliff Journal, 23 November & 6 December 1830.

<sup>190</sup>Missionary Notices 187 (1831), 8 August 1830 Kay journal extract, pp. 482-483; Whiteside, Methodist Church, p. 187.

<sup>191</sup>Ayliff Journal, 5 July 1834.

<sup>192</sup>Moyer found that the association of the Mfengu with the missionaries reaffirmed Xhosa determination to resist Christianity: 'Mfengu', p. 483. Shorter reports that where religion serves as a vehicle of protest for a minority group or immigrant community, the message becomes marginally relevant: Aylward Shorter, African Culture and the Christian Church (London, 1973), p. 78.

<sup>193</sup>Ayliff Journal, 13 & 17 July 1834.

<sup>194</sup>Ayliff Journal, 17 September 1832.

<sup>195</sup>Ayliff Journal, 12 January & 19 November 1834.

forbidden,<sup>196</sup> a change from when Hintsa had earlier publicly stated 'that no man need fear his displeasure by coming to hear the word of God'.<sup>197</sup> He visited the station to demand the property of its residents, about which they complained to Ayliff:

'Hintza is tired of his teacher and wants him away; hence he takes from us all our little property..whatever we have, when he passes the station, he takes it away...'<sup>198</sup>

A relative of Hintsa's defended his actions:

'Hintza has done no wrong: for the going of people to live on the station with the teacher will cause war betwixt Hintza and the teacher; so that, in order to prevent this, Hintza has taken away the cattle, not so much to punish those people, as to be a warning to others.'<sup>199</sup>

Thus Hintsa actively discouraged his people from coming under the missionary's influence, a strategy either initiated or encouraged by diviners.<sup>200</sup>

In an effort to break this emerging allegiance and withdraw from missionary observation in light of poor colonial-Xhosa relations, Hintsa decided to move his people to the north away from Ayliff's influence.<sup>201</sup> Ayliff postulated the reasons for this move:

The missionary is, and must be, the friend of the oppressed... so that, in such cases, the chief is led to consider the missionary not his friend, but the friend of his people. Hintza, I know, is jealous at the growing influence of the station in his tribe. It appears to him impossible that his people can embrace Christianity, and at the same time remain faithful to

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<sup>196</sup>Ayliff Journal, 25 June 1832: at the public examination of scholars, one of the speakers said, 'You say you don't come to the School because Hintza has not given you the word to come. Who is Hintza? Hintza is a man. Where are all the great Captains of the land? They are all gone, but see, the earth is not gone.' The quote indicates not only Hintsa's opposition to the school but the station's undermining of his authority.

<sup>197</sup>Missionary Notices 154 (1828), 31 March 1828 Shrewsbury letter, p. 537.

<sup>198</sup>Missionary Notices 240 (1835), 18 November 1834 Ayliff journal extract, p. 188; cf. Ayliff Journal, 23 April 1831. Ayliff reproved Hintsa for this: Ayliff Journal, 26 July 1834.

<sup>199</sup>Missionary Notices 240 (1835), 21 November 1834 Ayliff journal extract, pp. 188-189.

<sup>200</sup>Missionary Notices 219 (1834), 31 August 1832 Ayliff journal extract, p. 438.

<sup>201</sup>Ayliff Journal, 3 September 1834.

his interest; these feelings and fears are strengthened by the conduct of his doctors, who oppose the Gospel, because by it their craft is in danger.<sup>202</sup>

Ayliff had outwardly supported Hintsas's authority in refusing to decide legal matters<sup>203</sup> and in telling the station people to obey their leaders.<sup>204</sup> Yet when Ayliff encouraged those living on or close to the station to remove with Hintsas in September,<sup>205</sup> two months later he was still reporting good attendance from 'surrounding kraals' at Butterworth.<sup>206</sup>

When Hintsas came back from the north to witness a baptismal service, he was livid that Ayliff 'could throw water upon my dogs'.<sup>207</sup> He returned a week later to order three families to follow him, charging one Mfengu with running away from him.<sup>208</sup> The missionary was then told that he was 'attatching [sic] the people to the station to form a party against Hintsas, and...that we were but colonial spies upon the conduct of Hintsas'.<sup>209</sup> After a lengthy stalemate, Hintsas left the three families behind but took their cattle.<sup>210</sup> After the outbreak of war, Ayliff deemed his position *vis-à-vis* Hintsas to be too precarious to warrant staying on, leaving on 17 February 1835 for Clarkebury.<sup>211</sup> As the purpose of the missionaries became clear, then, initial friendliness turned to

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<sup>202</sup>Missionary Notices 240 (1835), 3 September 1834 Ayliff journal extract, pp. 185-186. The reference to the 'oppressed' alludes to the Mfengu who, Hintsas realized, would not long 'remain faithful to his interest'.

<sup>203</sup>W.M.S., 1 July 1834 Ayliff journal extract, 12 June 1835.

<sup>204</sup>W.M.S., 12 January 1834 Ayliff journal extract, 12 March 1834.

<sup>205</sup>Ayliff Journal, 10 November 1834.

<sup>206</sup>Ayliff Journal, 23 & 28 November 1834.

<sup>207</sup>Missionary Notices 240 (1835), 9 November 1834 Ayliff journal extract, p. 186.

<sup>208</sup>Ayliff Journal, 18 November 1834.

<sup>209</sup>Ibid.

<sup>210</sup>Ibid.

<sup>211</sup>Ayliff Journal; 17 February 1835.

opposition and - in Hintsas's case - to open hostility.

In evaluating the success of missionary labours to 1835, it is necessary to compare responses at the two stations. The measure of success in terms of conversions can best be measured by the number of Society members.<sup>212</sup> If a person showed a 'serious' demeanour, s/he was invited to attend the catechumen class and was baptized and accepted into Society after consistently attending this class for some time.<sup>213</sup> There were significantly more converts in the first eight years at Butterworth (35 baptisms) than during ten years at Mount Coke (12 baptisms). At Butterworth, Hintsas showed indifference and sometimes hostility to the message, while at Mount Coke Ndlambe was more accommodating. The reception of the Gospel was therefore not influenced by the attitude of the chiefs but was rather a negative response of the Xhosa to the content of the message.

There is no doubt that the frontier disturbances and commandos had a deleterious effect on missionary endeavours in Xhosaland at this time.<sup>214</sup> Young noted that he had less difficulty 'collecting people together' during times of peace,<sup>215</sup> and Kay recorded that his listeners seemed to be 'cold as death itself' after the murder of two English soldiers.<sup>216</sup> An elderly man told Ayliff that the Xhosa would 'not easily be brought to receive what you say, especially now as war has again troubled our land'.<sup>217</sup>

To evaluate whether this unsettled situation explains Xhosa rejection of the

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<sup>212</sup>The Wesleyan Methodists baptized infants, therefore baptism without acceptance into Society did not mean conversion had occurred.

<sup>213</sup>Ayliff Journal, 29 March 1833.

<sup>214</sup>Williams, 'Missionaries', pp. 92-98, 157-165.

<sup>215</sup>Young, Missionary Narrative, p. 73.

<sup>216</sup>W.M.S., 22 December 1825 Kay journal extract, 18 February 1826.

<sup>217</sup>Missionary Notices 289 (1831), Ayliff letter, 13 December 1830, p. 519.

Gospel, it is necessary to compare the situation at mission stations further inland. School attendance among the Bomvana and Mpondo reflected the relative peace and security of the area: at the Wesleyan stations of Morley and Buntingville, 412 and 460 students respectively received missionary instruction in 1833; Mount Coke registered 26 scholars and Butterworth 73 for the same year.<sup>218</sup> Significantly, the number of Society members at Buntingville and Morley was not proportionate to school attendance, with the numbers of converts paralleling those of Mount Coke and Butterworth. Cragg confirmed this, noting that the fruit of missionary efforts was 'pitifully small' among the Mpondo despite the absence of continual disturbances and war,<sup>219</sup> and it is therefore evident that resistance to the missionary message was due to factors that went beyond the troubled political situation.

During the Sixth Frontier War of 1834-35, Butterworth and Mount Coke were destroyed.<sup>220</sup> The Annual Meeting of the W.M.S. in 1835 admitted the 'humiliating fact' that 'no tribe of the Amakosa have nationally received the gospel'.<sup>221</sup> Although Stephen Kay glowingly reported the many outward changes that Christianity had wrought in Xhosaland,<sup>222</sup> such as the keeping of the sabbath and burial of the dead, he conceded

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<sup>218</sup>Figures are based upon statistics recorded in W.M.S., Minutes of Meeting - Albany District, February 1833.

<sup>219</sup>Cragg, 'Amampondo', p. 30.

<sup>220</sup>After the 1834-35 war, Butterworth recovered quickly, while Mount Coke was not rebuilt until 1838: Slee, 'Wesleyan Methodism', pp. 79, 82; Walker, 'Mount Coke', p. 23.

<sup>221</sup>Graham's Town Journal, 27 March 1835.

<sup>222</sup>Kay presumptuously stated that 'the despotism of the chieftains has evidently been checked, and their bloody wars have again and again been prevented by the influence of Christian Missions': Papers Relative to the Wesleyan Missions (December 1831), Kay letter.

that these changes were only evident on the mission stations.<sup>223</sup> Shrewsbury, who by 1830 had spent time at both stations, summed up the state of the work in discouraging words:

I do not expect to see the Gospel have such widely-extended success in Southern Africa for many years to come...there is scarcely any change in the national character or improvement in the entire body of the people...as a nation, or as tribes, we have to do with a haughty, fierce, proudly independent people; and they are apt to consider themselves alike independent both of God and Man.<sup>224</sup>

The resistance was evidently manifested by Xhosa society as a whole. It is necessary to explain this by examining African and Western religious concepts and Xhosa perceptions of the relevance of the latter to themselves and their society.

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<sup>223</sup>Kay, Succinct Statement, pp. 71-86. Young also gives an optimistic list of changes that the missionaries had supposedly wrought: Narrative, pp. 63-64, 150-151.

<sup>224</sup>W.M.S., Shrewsbury to Secretaries, June 30, 1830. Sir Benjamin D'Urban claimed that all the missionaries in 'Caffreland' had told him that 'although they had been, as they hoped, successful in the conversion of many of the race of Hottentots and of Fingoes, they could not flatter themselves that they had ever made a lasting salutary impression upon one of the race of Caffres...': W.M.S., D'Urban to Earl of Aberdeen, 19 June 1835 (Copy of Dispatch).

## AFRICAN PERCEPTIONS OF MISSIONARY CONCEPTS

People make assumptions about the intrinsic nature of the universe which guide their choices in everyday affairs.<sup>1</sup> The Xhosa had a distinct worldview which incorporated beliefs regarding divinity and influenced their choices.<sup>2</sup> Because there was no radical gap between nature and the unseen, religion was not a separate category of thought or experience for the Xhosa.<sup>3</sup> The absence of systematized 'theology'<sup>4</sup> led van der Kemp to conclude that the Xhosa had no religious beliefs:

I never could perceive that they had any religion, nor any idea of the existence of a God. I am speaking nationally, for there are many individuals who have some notion of his existence, which they have received from adjacent nations.<sup>5</sup>

Subsequent Xhosaland missionaries were greatly influenced by van der Kemp's ideas.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Monica Wilson, Religion and the Transformation of Society (Cambridge, 1971), p. 2; Placide Tempels, Bantu Philosophy (Paris, 1959), p. 19.

<sup>2</sup>Traditional Xhosa beliefs during the early nineteenth century will be referred to in the past tense; it is recognized that these beliefs still exist in some parts of South Africa, albeit in an altered form.

<sup>3</sup>Janet Hodgson, The God of the Xhosa (Cape Town, 1982), p. 17.

<sup>4</sup>The missionaries put extraordinary emphasis on doctrine: Russell Lynn Staples, 'Christianity and the Cult of the Ancestors: Belief and Ritual among the Bantu-Speaking Peoples of southern Africa' (Princeton Theological Seminary, Ph.D. Thesis, 1981), p. 214.

<sup>5</sup>J.T. van der Kemp in Transactions of the Missionary Society 2 vols. (London, 1803), vol. 1, p. 432. Previous to this, le Vaillant had also claimed that they had 'no religion at all': Francois le Vaillant, Travels into the Interior..., 2 vols. (London, 1796), vol. 1, p. 292. Alberti declared that they had no concept of God, while Lichtenstein said they believed in a creator but borrowed the name from the Khoikhoi. Lichtenstein gleaned most of his information on the Xhosa from van der Kemp, indicating that van der Kemp later discovered the Xhosa creation names for God: Ludwig Alberti, Account of the Tribal Life and Customs of the Xhosa (Cape Town, 1968), p. 48; H. Lichtenstein, Travels in southern Africa, in the Years 1803, 1804, 1805, and 1806 (London, 1812), pp. 244, 253.

<sup>6</sup>Ayliff, Vocabulary, pp. iv-vi.

The ultimate beliefs of the Xhosa, which were enacted through ritual,<sup>7</sup> were dismissed by the Wesleyans as superstition.<sup>8</sup> Mary Kingsley, the critic of missionaries, pointed out

their tendency to regard the African minds as so many jugs, which had only to be emptied of the stuff that is in them and refilled with the particular form of doctrine they, the missionaries, are engaged in teaching...<sup>9</sup>

This *tabula rasa* approach led to difficulties: because it assumed that the Xhosa had no religion,<sup>10</sup> the missionaries never seriously engaged with the culture and beliefs of the peoples they were trying to reach.<sup>11</sup> The repeated failure to convince Africans of the truth of the Gospel indicated that a barrier stood in the way, namely, existing beliefs which conflicted with fundamental tenets of Christianity.

It is surprising that the missionaries would persist in the *tabula rasa* notion as they were constantly questioned about the message and its relevance to Africans.

Dunbar Moodie noted the challenge facing the evangelists:

The [Xhosa] are a reasoning and independent people, who have no prejudices in favour of Christianity, and have no immediate interest to serve by adopting our religion; and it is only by argument that they are to

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<sup>7</sup>Wilson, Transformation, pp. 51, 125; Shorter, African Culture, pp. 45-46. Hammond-Tooke defines ritual as a stereotyped behaviour pattern, expressed symbolically, which maintains or effects a significant change in man's relations with the supernatural: 'Worldview II' in The Bantu-Speaking Peoples of Southern Africa, W.D. Hammond-Tooke, ed. (London, 1974), p. 344.

<sup>8</sup>Shaw stated, 'The Kaffir nations cannot properly be said to possess any religion; but they practise a complicated system of superstition...': My Mission, p. 188; cf. W.M.S., Shrewsbury to Secretaries, 30 June 1831.

<sup>9</sup>Warren, Social History, p. 75.

<sup>10</sup>'They may be said to be without any religion, true or false...they are also without any knowledge of the Supreme Being, nor do they in any way worship Him': Shrewsbury, Memorials, p. 247; cf. Steedman, Wanderings, p. 37.

<sup>11</sup>This approach was common to most Western missionaries, who regarded traditional religions as 'fetishism and a bunch of superstitions': Peter B. Clarke, West Africa and Christianity (London, 1986), p. 3; cf. Richard Gray, Black Christians and White Missionaries (New Haven and London, 1990), p. 2.

be convinced of its truth...<sup>12</sup>

The missionaries at Mount Coke and Butterworth commented on these arguments, with the missionaries complaining about the 'infidel objections'<sup>13</sup> and 'trifling and disputatious' nature of the people.<sup>14</sup> Some Africans visited the station with the sole object of 'contending about the Government of God in the World'.<sup>15</sup> This was a source of concern to the missionaries, as Shrewsbury clearly expressed:

On this occasion, as on all others, we found the Kaffirs to be an acute and inquisitive people, and peculiarly evidencing a natural tendency to scepticism, since they are more ready at raising objections against divine truth, than at receiving it with a meek and lowly mind.<sup>16</sup>

Such queries demonstrated that the Xhosa were working from a basis of assumptions which comprised their religion.

In analyzing Xhosa perceptions, it is imperative to understand the belief system which generated them. This is not an easy task, for religion changes over time, particularly when a society is faced with major economic, political, or social change.<sup>17</sup> We have detailed accounts of religion among Xhosa-speaking peoples,<sup>18</sup> but none that definitively describe the religious beliefs of the Xhosa between 1825 and 1835. It is therefore necessary to rely on recent works as well as nineteenth-century traveller and missionary accounts.

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<sup>12</sup>Moodie, Ten Years, vol. 2, pp. 284-285, 287; cf. Hutchinson, 'Missionary Activity', p. 167.

<sup>13</sup>Missionary Notices 193 (1832), 28 May 1831 Ayliff letter, p. 8.

<sup>14</sup>W.M.S., Shrewsbury to Secretaries, 30 September 1829; Kay noted that 'a much greater degree of acuteness and scepticism was apparent, than we had expected to find': Kay, Travels, p. 37.

<sup>15</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 7 January 1829.

<sup>16</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 7 December 1826.

<sup>17</sup>Robin Horton, 'African Conversion', Africa, XLI (1971), p. 101-105.

<sup>18</sup>For example, Monica Hunter's Reaction to Conquest describes the impact of Christianity and European culture on the Mpondo.

The worldview of the Xhosa was monistic: nature, man, and the unseen were inseparably involved in a total community.<sup>19</sup> Because their small-scale societies had few impersonal relationships, personal causes were sought for misfortune.<sup>20</sup> For every phenomenon - visible or invisible, material or spiritual - there was an explanation,<sup>21</sup> which provided an impressive instrument for prediction and control.<sup>22</sup> As a result, the abstract teachings of Western Christianity were sometimes incapable of satisfying the questions of Africans.<sup>23</sup> Witness the questions posed by African listeners:

Some asked what had become of all the old people who died before the Gospel came into the country; others wanted to know where Adam and Eve now are, whether they were saved or lost; some asked where God stood when he made the world, for they thought he could not have made a world like this without a proper standing-place; others wanted to know...why God did not destroy Satan for introducing sin into the world, and causing so much confusion.<sup>24</sup>

Significantly, the missionaries did not report the answers they gave: there often were none since Christianity leaves room for the mysterious and unknown.<sup>25</sup>

In addition to a lack of answers, the Christians propagated abstract concepts such as grace, the redemption of mankind, and the lostness of the soul. William Shaw noted

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<sup>19</sup>Taylor, Primal Vision, p. 72. The integrated nature of traditional African life was not fully appreciated by the nineteenth century missionaries, who were products of a European culture which, due to profound secularization, had caused religious beliefs to be segregated from social life: Beidelman, Colonial Evangelism, p. 25.

<sup>20</sup>Wilson, Transformation, p. 17.

<sup>21</sup>Taylor, Primal Vision, p. 79.

<sup>22</sup>Horton, 'African Conversion', p. 101.

<sup>23</sup>It is often a difficult matter to deal faithfully and affectionately, yet satisfactorily, with Caffre inquiries': Calderwood, Caffres and Caffre Missions, p. 76.

<sup>24</sup>Young, Missionary Narrative, pp. 73-74; cf. Shrewsbury Journal, 19-22 November 1832.

<sup>25</sup>I Corinthians 13:12 - 'Now we see but a poor reflection; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully.'

the 'great difficulty they find in entertaining an idea of beings that are wholly spiritual',<sup>26</sup> which Ayliff echoed in stating 'that any discourse on spiritual things is as totally unintelligible as if we spoke English to them'.<sup>27</sup> The missionary records show that comprehension was poor, for upon being questioned as to the content of a sermon, many would supply verbatim answers.<sup>28</sup> Replies such as '[I] must be washed in the blood of Christ from every spot of guilt or we can never be admitted to glory'<sup>29</sup> are suspect.<sup>30</sup> One man replied with refreshing honesty,

'The Word is great, but it has gone in at one ear and out at the other: I do not distinctly recollect anything of what you told us. This shows how stupid us Caffres are!'<sup>31</sup>

When Moodie asked an old man if he had listened to the missionary message,

The old man replied that he had gone once or twice, but that he could not understand what they said, and that he had therefore discontinued his visits, though he believed them to be good kind of people, who did him

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<sup>26</sup>Wesleyan Reports (1828), 14 February 1828 Shaw journal extract, p. 65.

<sup>27</sup>Ayliff Journal, 28 July 1833. This is a telling statement, for much of the lack of comprehension was due to the English garb in which Christianity was clothed.

<sup>28</sup>When Africans did understand the message, they would indicate this by expressing their new knowledge in terms of their own culture. One man likened the change in lifestyle expected by saying 'he was to cast off his old kaross, and put on a new one': Steedman, Wanderings, pp. 31-32. Another man stated, 'Yes, we now see that our whole nation is in the muddy hole: and that the Great Word which you have brought is come to drag us out': W.M.S., 16 April 1826 Kay journal extract, 30 July 1826; cf. Young, Narrative, pp. 131-132.

<sup>29</sup>W.M.S., Young to Secretaries, 1 January 1829.

<sup>30</sup>Lack of understanding was probably the reason for African inattention and slumber during sermons: Shrewsbury Journal, 22 January 1832; Moodie, Ten Years, p. 257.

<sup>31</sup>W.M.S., 16 April 1826 Kay journal extract, 30 July 1826. The Xhosa frequently commented on their 'stupidity' and 'ignorance': *ibid.*, 3 April 1825 James Whitworth journal extract, April 1825; *ibid.*, Shrewsbury to Secretaries, 30 September 1829. This probably indicated their lack of understanding or their sarcastic excuse when ignoring the message, as when two men 'resorted to the Old Caffre plea, - "We are an ignorant, stupid people, and you must not be weary of teaching us"' in order to avoid being expelled from the station: *ibid.*, 21 January 1831 Shrewsbury Journal Extract, 31 December 1831.

no harm.<sup>32</sup>

These abstract Western ideas, not comparable to any beliefs in Xhosa culture, were hence rarely comprehended by African listeners unless they were frequently exposed to the Gospel.<sup>33</sup> Although many Africans would state that the message was 'holy, just, and good',<sup>34</sup> the Wesleyans did not understand that this assent was a polite way of refusing the new teaching.<sup>35</sup>

### Divinity

The difficulties in communicating abstract teachings were compounded by differing Western and African conceptions of divinity. Social anthropologists have long debated whether or not the Bantu-speaking peoples of Africa had the equivalent of the Western concept of a Supreme Being. Monica Wilson stated that the belief in a High God was at best shadowy,<sup>36</sup> while John Henderson Soga insisted that the Xhosa were monotheistic and offered sacrifices to God through the medium of the ancestors.<sup>37</sup> What is significant in this debate is not whether they had a concept of a Supreme Being

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<sup>32</sup>Moodie, Ten Years, pp. 278-279.

<sup>33</sup>While learning Xhosa, Shrewsbury learned one religious phrase at a time and repeated it to all he met, e.g. 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners': Shrewsbury, Memorials, p. 252. Such phrases were probably never comprehended by first-time listeners.

<sup>34</sup>W.M.S., Shrewsbury to Secretaries, 30 June 1831; cf. *ibid.*, 16-22 March 1828.

<sup>35</sup>H.H. Dugmore similarly misread African politeness: he was astonished at how peaceable the people were when their customs were attacked and at their thankfulness that the 'Great Word' had been brought to them: W.M.S., Dugmore to Secretaries, 20 June 1834; cf. Wesleyan Reports (1828), 10 April 1828 William Shaw journal extract, p. 66.

<sup>36</sup>Wilson, Transformation, p. 32.

<sup>37</sup>Soga, Ama-Xosa, pp. 149-150. Soga's work was greatly influenced by his Christian upbringing.

that paralleled the Western one<sup>38</sup> but that the debate exists at all. The idea of a personal divinity was not familiar to Bantu speakers,<sup>39</sup> such that their God has been described as a background God, a God who is but has gone away.<sup>40</sup> His presence did not enter into daily life<sup>41</sup> but was acknowledged in the very existence of the seen and unseen world, a presence which pervaded every animate or inanimate object.<sup>42</sup> The only Xhosa ritual directed to the transcendent deity *Qamata* was recorded long after the missionaries had arrived,<sup>43</sup> reflecting the religious move toward monotheism.

According to Hodgson, the Xhosa were influenced by Khoi beliefs relating to the Supreme Being, the resurrection, and a dualistic concept of good and evil.<sup>44</sup> However, hers is not a historical study and the responses of Africans examined here do not reflect any such knowledge base.<sup>45</sup> When van der Kemp first lived among the Xhosa in 1799, he claimed that the Xhosa had no word to express deity and thus borrowed the word '*Thixo*' from the Khoikhoi.<sup>46</sup> The missionaries who followed consequently had problems determining original beliefs about *UThixo* but did discover two other names:

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<sup>38</sup>A thorough evaluation of this debate is given in Staples, 'Ancestors', pp. 90-100. Staples concludes that concepts of deity were so vague as to have little meaning or importance.

<sup>39</sup>'Enoch who walked with God was a stranger in Africa': Wilson, *Transformation*, p. 48. The Cape Nguni believed in spiritual beings but these spirits did not fit into the structural system of the ancestor cult: Hammond-Tooke, 'Worldview I', pp. 321-323.

<sup>40</sup>Taylor, *Primal Vision*, p. 84; Hodgson, *God of the Xhosa*, p. 35; Shorter, *African Culture*, p. 65.

<sup>41</sup>Shorter, *African Culture*, p. 57; Hammond-Tooke, 'Worldview I', p. 319.

<sup>42</sup>Tempels, *Bantu Philosophy*, p. 46.

<sup>43</sup>Hodgson, *God of the Xhosa*, p. 77.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 9, 37.

<sup>45</sup>For example, she states that the name '*Qamata*' was mentioned for the first time in the 1870's; Donovan Williams found that the name was first recorded in 1843-44: 'Missionaries', p. 291.

<sup>46</sup>Van der Kemp, *Transactions*, 15 April 1800 journal extract, p. 416.

Him they called UTixo, Umdali, and Umenzi. Dr. van der Kemp could never correctly ascertain the meaning of UTixo; neither can we, for the people have no definite idea of its import.....The signification of the other two names is clear; Umdali is the Former, from Dala, for form, fashion; and Umenzi is the Maker, from Enza, to make...no worship of any kind was paid to him.<sup>47</sup>

Using the name *Thixo* may have worked to the missionaries' advantage: because there was little or no religious content associated with the word,<sup>48</sup> Christian concepts could be conveyed through use of the name without encountering any opposing preconceptions. When the names 'umenzi' and 'um dali'<sup>49</sup> were discovered, there seemed no point in discarding the name *UThixo*:

But as the word UTixo is now so generally used, and no Kaffir but understands the meaning of the same, it is doubtful if any utility would accrue from changing it.<sup>50</sup>

The name itself was not as significant as the concepts it conveyed to the Khoikhoi interpreters and therefore to the missionaries. The evangelists were led to believe that the Xhosa believed in a God similar to that of the Khoikhoi, a God who was

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<sup>47</sup>W.M.S., Shrewsbury to Secretaries, 31 June 1831. Names for the creator were also found by the missionary John Bennie in 1822 (Walker, 'Mount Coke', p. 7) and the name 'Dala' is mentioned by Steedman (Wanderings, p. 249); cf. Hodgson, God of the Xhosa, p. 42. The beliefs among the Mpondo, who lived east of the Xhosa, were identical: Kay, Travels, p. 339; Hunter, Reaction to Conquest, pp. 269-270.

<sup>48</sup>Callaway also believed that 'UThixo' was borrowed from the Khoikhoi but concluded that there was no evidence to support that the word meant 'God' to those using it: Amazulu, pp. 105, 111. Callaway's work relied on Xhosa as well as Zulu informants.

<sup>49</sup>The creation names *um dali* and *umenzi* share the prefix 'um', which is the prefix for the first noun class in Xhosa (referring to people) and also the third noun class (referring to non-personal items). Setiloane found that the prefix 'mo' for the word *Modimo* ('God') among the Sotho-Tswana indicated that it belonged to the third noun class of intangibles, not people: Gabriel Setiloane, African Theology (Cape Town: 1986), p. 24. Although *um dali* is sometimes termed *uDali* by the missionaries, they may have changed the 'um' to 'u' to coincide with their idea of a personal God.

<sup>50</sup>Ayliff, Vocabulary, p. vi.

approached directly and was conceived in personal terms.<sup>51</sup> On the contrary, the Xhosa, as with many Africans, were aware of a mysterious, impersonal, and pervasive power which was not conceived in terms of a person.<sup>52</sup>

This African conception of divinity worked to the missionaries' benefit and disadvantage. On the positive side, the Xhosa were conscious of God, albeit as an awesome and unapproachable force.<sup>53</sup> Its praise-names indicate that it was acknowledged as having created (*umdali* and *umenzi*) and as being the source of all things (*uHlanga*, *umHlanga*).<sup>54</sup> It was also recognized as being powerful and therefore dangerous,<sup>55</sup> which would explain why it was later only approached on rare occasions. The proselytizers thus awakened Africans to their unexpressed consciousness of God.<sup>56</sup>

This awareness was frequently verbalized. The Xhosa showed an initial eagerness to know more about this God and how to approach him. There is some evidence that previous generations had in fact done so, as this extract shows:

One of them, in particular, observed that the old men say that their forefathers prayed to God more than they now do; that they themselves did not wholly neglect prayer to Him, and that whenever, in a scarcity of food, they were directed by the note of the honey-bird to a collection of honey in the trees, they never partake of it without thanking God for His

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<sup>51</sup>Europeans have consequently assumed that divinity in Africa was seen as a person, not a force: Setiloane, *African Theology* pp. 21-22.

<sup>52</sup>This belief has been termed 'dynamism': Edwin W. Smith, *African Ideas of God* (London, 1950), pp. 79, 83.

<sup>53</sup>Setiloane, *African Theology*, p. 27. For this reason the ancestors were supplicated, for they had been humans and so understood and were near to the living: Edwin W. Smith, *African Beliefs and Christian Faith* (London, 1936), p. 69.

<sup>54</sup>Hodgson, *God of the Xhosa*, pp. 42-45. It is noteworthy that *umHlanga* is referred to as a place or source, not a person: Ayliff Journal, 8 January 1834; Shaw, *My Mission*, p. 195. Other missionary records also link divinity with creation: W.M.S., 18 June 1828 Davis journal extract, 16 July 1828.

<sup>55</sup>Wilson, *Transformation*, p. 48.

<sup>56</sup>Setiloane, *African Theology*, p. 29.

goodness, and entreating Him to be mindful of them in future.<sup>57</sup>

Africans were thus certain of the existence of divinity but not of its qualities.<sup>58</sup> As a Gqunukhwebe chief told Shaw, 'we knew his name long ago, but we knew nothing of his nature'.<sup>59</sup> The missionaries thus had no difficulty in persuading their congregations to pray<sup>60</sup> and were frequently asked how to serve God<sup>61</sup> and to pray.<sup>62</sup> On several occasions, the missionaries witnessed people praying - without prodding - some days after hearing the Gospel.<sup>63</sup> Shrewsbury noted this positive response:

the people willingly obeyed our exhortation as we departed, to retire and call upon the name of God. At one kraal whither we came rather early a few of its residents were absent, and as we afterwards ascertained, they were employed in secret devotion.<sup>64</sup>

The influence of the Xhosa prophet Nxele also encouraged the people to pray, which Kay noted:

I may here notice a custom which prevails throughout the country, and seems to have originated with one of the natives, who, some years ago, set himself up as a prophet; and which has obtained so great an influence, that the most rude and untractable conform to it. After having been addressed on religious subjects, whether in the house or the open air, they

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<sup>57</sup>Shrewsbury, Memorials, p. 234. One convert compared hearing the Gospel to following the honey-bird: Shrewsbury Journal, 11 July 1830.

<sup>58</sup>Smith, African Beliefs, p. 192.

<sup>59</sup>Graham's Town Journal, 15 May 1834, Report of Wesleyville Missionary Meeting.

<sup>60</sup>'When the service closed, the people, who till this hour never heard of God, retired into the bushes to appreciate his mercy': W.M.S., 1 April 1825 Whitworth journal extract, April 1825; cf. Shrewsbury Journal, 20 November 1830.

<sup>61</sup>'Universally (for I have not found an exception), when we speak to the people on the things of God, both small and great will reply, "We are in darkness and ignorance, and understand not how we are to serve God"': Shrewsbury Journal, 16 September 1827.

<sup>62</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 21-28 October 1827 & 13-17 August 1832; W.M.S., Shrewsbury to Secretaries, 26 September 1832.

<sup>63</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 23 November 1827 & 20 November 1830; W.M.S., Young to Secretaries, 1 January 1829; *ibid.*, Shrewsbury to Secretaries, 30 June 1831.

<sup>64</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 9-13 August 1831. These prayers were a departure from those offered to ancestors, which occurred communally.

immediately and invariably repair to a short distance, and again prostrate themselves, with their faces to the ground, for the purpose apparently of praying.<sup>65</sup>

Prayer directed to a Supreme Being was thus an activity quickly adopted by Xhosa-speaking peoples.

Another indication that missionary sermons touched on an awareness of God is the emotional response exhibited during church services. A striking feature of the Wesleyan correspondence is the frequency of comments that the people 'wept exceedingly', 'mourn[ed] with a loud voice before God', '[wept] even aloud for mercy', etc.<sup>66</sup> These displays of sentiment were especially common at revivals<sup>67</sup> and reflected similar displays of mass emotion at evangelical revivals in Britain.<sup>68</sup> That the missionary message struck a responsive chord is unquestionable, but it rarely penetrated beyond this initial response.<sup>69</sup>

The African concept of divinity also presented obstacles to the missionaries. Christianity presents a God very different from the African conception, which was summed up by the Methodist E.H. Hurcombe:

By proclaiming Jesus Christ as the way to the Father, we make known a God who is present, alive and real; not a great impersonal Force, but a

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<sup>65</sup>Missionary Notices 143 (1827), Kay letter of March 1827, p. 357. The prophet referred to was probably Nxele, who was Ndlambe's war doctor.

<sup>66</sup>For example, W.M.S., 11 May 1826 Kay journal extract, 30 July 1826; *ibid.*, Shrewsbury to Secretaries, 31 March 1828; *ibid.*, Young to Secretaries, 1 January & 26 August 1829; Shrewsbury Journal, 2 March 1828; cf. Ward, Five Years, pp. 114-115.

<sup>67</sup>Ayliff Journal, 12 July 1831. This free expression of feelings appears to have been discouraged in Xhosa society, as shown by the uneasiness displayed by Africans when they saw someone emotionally affected during a service: Young, Missionary Narrative, p. 36; Ayliff Journal, 15 May 1831; W.M.S., Kay to Secretaries, March 1827; Shrewsbury Journal, 2 August 1829 & 25 April 1831. The outpouring of emotions during services may therefore have provided an outlet not available within the Xhosa community.

<sup>68</sup>Hobsbawm, Age of Revolution, p. 277; Pudney, John Wesley, p. 71.

<sup>69</sup>Shrewsbury frequently commented that 'the word did not appear to reach the hearts of the people': Shrewsbury Journal, 30 January, 13 March, & 30 October 1831.

loving, personal God, seeking to save, waiting to be loved, longing to bless.<sup>70</sup>

The idea of God incarnate was difficult to convey and frequently resulted in disbelief. Kay reported on Ndlambe's reaction: "Where (exclaimed he) does that man (God) live?" This question is one which the Caffres frequently ask.<sup>71</sup> Moreover, the Being's behaviour did not make sense to them, as Moodie pointed out:

it is a very hard matter to make them believe that an all-powerful and merciful Deity would suffer his own son to die a cruel death to make atonement for the sins of mankind.<sup>72</sup>

Hence most of the questions posed revolved around the human attributes of this God:

'When the missionary returns home, does he tell God about us? And in what manner we have received his word?' This last question was put to me more than once. Several of the people seem to have an idea that we are something like the messengers their chief sends about any business, who, when he returns to the chief, gives him an account of the whole matter.<sup>73</sup>

In order to probe this mystery, one man questioned Shrewsbury:

He then asked a variety of frivolous questions concerning God, such as - 'What sort of a being He was? whether He had a wife? whether He had cattle? how many, and of what kind they were?' When we reproved him for such idle questions, he replied that he had too much wisdom to ask idly, but being ignorant, he wished to learn.<sup>74</sup>

Had the missionaries understood their questioner's previous conception of divinity, they would not have labelled such queries 'frivolous'.

Missionary ignorance had additional shortcomings. Their message stressed the benefits of Christianity in the next life and under-emphasized the fulfilment it could

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<sup>70</sup>E.H. Hurcombe notebook (MS 15,117, Cory Library); cf. Best, 'Evangelicalism', p. 39. As Hurcombe was writing in this century, his emphasis on the loving nature of God does not reflect Wesleyan missionary sermons in the nineteenth century.

<sup>71</sup>W.M.S., 26 June 1825 Kay journal extract, July 1825.

<sup>72</sup>Moodie, Ten Years, p. 285.

<sup>73</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 19-22 November 1833.

<sup>74</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 7 December 1826.

provide on earth. Most sermons were delivered on 'the solemn realities of another world, the resurrection from the dead, and the day of Judgement'.<sup>75</sup> Because Xhosa religion had no specific ideas concerning the afterlife,<sup>76</sup> their worldview was 'unashamedly this-worldly in orientation'.<sup>77</sup> The Wesleyans sometimes made passing reference to the 'unspeakable happiness attainable'<sup>78</sup> in this world but did not elaborate on how this could be realized.

As Shorter has pointed out, true religion has to be centred on mankind's culturally learned needs and interests, otherwise it is irrelevant.<sup>79</sup> The Xhosa had many spiritual and material needs which the Wesleyan Gospel did not address. On a material level, they were concerned with daily sustenance and illness. The 'good life' in Africa meant sufficient food, good health, and numerous children<sup>80</sup> for which the ancestors were petitioned. It was difficult to convince those experiencing such a life to espouse Christianity:

One of the interpreters, in conversing with the Master's wife [of the homestead], was anxious to convince her that without the knowledge of God she could not be happy...She observed, 'I am young, and in health. I have a husband and we possess corn, and cattle, and milk. Why should I not be happy? What do I need more?'<sup>81</sup>

The missionaries were repeatedly requested to pray for rain and one woman, upon being asked what she prayed for, replied, 'Cattle and corn and pumpkins'.<sup>82</sup> The missionary

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<sup>75</sup>W.M.S., 13 March 1825 Whitworth journal extract, n.d.

<sup>76</sup>Staples, 'Ancestors', pp. 84, 115, 142.

<sup>77</sup>Hammond-Tooke, 'Worldview I', p. 318.

<sup>78</sup>Missionary Notices 136 (1827), 20 June 1826 Kay journal extract, p. 244.

<sup>79</sup>Shorter, African Culture, pp. 53, 76.

<sup>80</sup>Beidelman, Colonial Evangelism, p. 39.

<sup>81</sup>Shaw, Journal, 6 May 1829 extract, p. 158.

<sup>82</sup>W.M.S., 30 March 1826 Kay journal extract, 1 April 1826.

message seemed to offer little to Africans, which one man expressed when he told Ayliff, 'O, I come constantly to the Chapel on the Sunday, but I never get anything for it'.<sup>83</sup>

Thus the missionary solution for all problems was spiritual whereas for the Xhosa, salvation meant prosperity and happiness in this life.<sup>84</sup> This is nowhere better illustrated than in the conversation between Kay and Ndlambe when the latter was ill:

[Ndlambe:] 'One says I ail one thing, and another tells me quite the contrary, pray what does God say respecting me?' I took occasion from hence to show him that God's word described him as being full of 'wounds and bruises and putrifying sores' but that the judge...before whose bar he must soon appear, waited to become His Physician.<sup>85</sup>

Due to their dependence on science, the missionaries did not emphasize God's power to provide sustenance or healing for man although there were many examples of this in the Old and New Testaments.<sup>86</sup> Moodie noted that

could the missionaries work miracles, like Christ and the Apostles, they would have little difficulty in converting the most barbarous nations through the medium of their senses.<sup>87</sup>

When the message was perceived to aid them, the recipients of the Gospel responded positively. One man was very interested in the Gospel for this reason:

he knew nothing about religion, but if there were really that in it which some persons professed to experience, he was determined to find it out,

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<sup>83</sup>Ayliff Journal, 17 April 1833.

<sup>84</sup>Staples, 'Ancestors', pp. 90, 212.

<sup>85</sup>W.M.S., 3 November 1826 Kay journal extract, January 1827; cf. 20 June 1826 Kay journal extract, 30 July 1826. Shrewsbury responded similarly to a sick man a year later: Shrewsbury Journal, 22 October 1827.

<sup>86</sup>See Elphick, 'Africans and the Christian Campaign', p. 303.

<sup>87</sup>Moodie, Ten Years, p. 285. It is interesting to note that where this-worldly needs have been addressed through healing and prophecy by the Pentecostal movement in Iboland, the church has experienced rapid growth: Ilogu, Christianity and Ibo Culture, pp. 88-89; cf. Gray, Black Christians and White Missionaries, p. 103. There is also much emphasis on these activities in the Independent Churches in South Africa today.

and not rest without the enjoyment of it.<sup>88</sup>

A minor chief, barely escaping with his life in an encounter with an elephant, was apprised by the missionary of God's intervention, to which the man replied, 'I now see it is all true, there is a God who took care of me, otherwise I must have been destroyed'.<sup>89</sup> Another man, after escaping with his life in the attack on Grahamstown in 1819, expressed his belief that 'God Almighty only...could have done it, who kept me alive to see this day and to hear his word'.<sup>90</sup> Ayliff was asked by one man, 'if we were to serve God, would he take care of us if we were in the midst of lions?'<sup>91</sup> A woman stated that 'she knew there was a God, because she felt he answered her prayers'.<sup>92</sup> The doctrine of God's intervention in the earthly affairs of man thus had tremendous potential which was never fully realized or exploited by the missionaries.

Some Africans perceived that the message was also not relevant to them as a race. They were acutely aware that the whites appeared to have a monopoly on the message:

Many were anxious to know how it was that the word of salvation, which was designed for all people...should have been detained so long amongst the white people...<sup>93</sup>

This was seen by some as a white conspiracy:

One man insisted on it that the English and Dutch had agreed to keep the word of God from the Caffres, and that therefore they had not the word of God before.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>88</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 25 May 1830. Shrewsbury quoted this man to show the extent African 'ignorance'.

<sup>89</sup>W.M.S., 9 March 1825 Shaw journal extract, April 1825.

<sup>90</sup>W.M.S., 28 January 1826 Kay journal extract, 18 February 1826.

<sup>91</sup>W.M.S., 17 April 1833 Ayliff journal extract, 18 September 1833.

<sup>92</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 24 August 1828.

<sup>93</sup>Young, Missionary Narrative, pp. 73-74.

<sup>94</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 16 March 1831.

A similar sentiment was expressed to William Shaw by a visitor from the Mbashe River:

'If,' said he, with much energy of expression, 'if what you say be true, then our forefathers are most likely gone to that place of torment which you speak of, for they lived exactly as we do. Now what is the reason the Great God did not send missionaries here a long time ago, that our forefathers might have heard the great word?'...any long and not obvious explanation would have been lost upon this untutored mind, and I was obliged, painfully obliged, to reply, 'God was pleased to give his Gospel to the white men first, and in his word he commanded them to preach it to all nations; but for many hundred years they had disobeyed and neglected this command.' The countenance of this Caffre beamed pleasure and satisfaction on my adding, 'But of late a number of good men have taken great notice of this command of God, which they find in the Bible, and are endeavouring to obey it, and to send the Gospel to all nations.'<sup>95</sup>

Such explanations evidently did not satisfy Africans, for there was some scepticism as to whether this word was meant for them. One listener asked what kind of tree was prohibited to Adam and whether its fruit was to be found in Caffreland<sup>96</sup> while another wished to know if Satan was black or white.<sup>97</sup> Race was on two occasions explicitly given as the reason for rejection of the Gospel:

'We are not to blame for our sins,' said one of them, 'God never gave us the Book which he hath given the White Men; he hath left us to go in our blindness from generation to generation.'<sup>98</sup>

Whether this was an excuse intended to put off the missionaries or a genuine reason for not accepting the word is uncertain.

There existed an awareness of divinity among Africans, then, which was awakened by Christian teachings. Instead of building on this existing knowledge, the

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<sup>95</sup>Wesleyan Reports (1824), 10 April 1824 Shaw letter, pp. 53-54.

<sup>96</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 2 September 1830.

<sup>97</sup>Young, Missionary Narrative, pp. 73-74.

<sup>98</sup>W.M.S., 7 January 1829 Shrewsbury journal extract, 31 December 1829; *ibid.*, 13 April 1830 Kay journal extract, 24 April 1830. Cf. Shrewsbury Journal, 16 March 1831 & 13-17 August 1832.

missionaries introduced a God who was personal and approachable but who paradoxically seemed unwilling to meet the temporal needs of His worshippers. The message was accordingly perceived as irrelevant to them as a race and to their material needs. What remains to be seen is whether the missionary message likewise ignored the spiritual needs of the Xhosa.

### Morality

Fundamental to Christianity is belief in the existence and consequences of sin. Salvation is necessary due to the evil of mankind, and it is only through confession of sin that man can be forgiven and attain eternal life.<sup>99</sup> In preaching the Gospel to the uninitiated, the missionaries had first to develop an awareness of sin in their listeners, for only a realization of it would make salvation seem necessary. The missionary message thus placed extraordinary emphasis on sin and God's judgment of it, but the Wesleyans' definition of sin differed significantly from that of the Xhosa.

The African world-view provided a prescription for every eventuality.<sup>100</sup> When any misfortune occurred, be it illness, death, crop failure, or epidemic, the reason had to be established.<sup>101</sup> All suffering was ultimately linked to evil,<sup>102</sup> which was behaviour that threatened the community:<sup>103</sup> an offence was not wrong in and of itself but because

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<sup>99</sup>I John 1:9 - 'If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.'

<sup>100</sup>Tempels, Bantu Philosophy, pp. 26, 76.

<sup>101</sup>Taylor contrasts the different approaches to illness: Westerners ask 'How?', Africans ask 'Why?': Primal Vision, p. 45. In addition, Christians accept the idea of chance: suffering can occur without the reason for it being known and can be viewed creatively: Wilson, Transformation, p. 48.

<sup>102</sup>Wilson, Transformation, p. 39; Gray, Black Christians and White Missionaries, pp. 5, 101.

<sup>103</sup>Taylor, Primal Vision, pp. 100, 178-182.

of its consequences.<sup>104</sup> Good behaviour was that which promoted harmonious social life<sup>105</sup> and in this sense African morality was communal as opposed to the missionary message of individual responsibility before God.<sup>106</sup> The most important moral prescriptions were those pertaining to respect for elders, fertility, peaceable relationships, and loyalty to the chief and political officers.<sup>107</sup> Hence African religion was inseparable from the social system since it was concerned primarily with the maintenance of the community and relations within it.

When suffering occurred, it was the role of the diviner to discover if it was due to witchcraft or to wrong-doing that had incurred the displeasure of the ancestors.<sup>108</sup> Behaviour that brought punishment from the ancestors included quarrelling between kinsmen or the neglect of traditional rituals;<sup>109</sup> the cause for ancestor anger would be confirmed and the appropriate ritual performed to appease it.<sup>110</sup> These ceremonies included confession and the symbolic blowing out of water which purged the person of anger and purified him of evil.<sup>111</sup> Through these means, the ancestors were the

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<sup>104</sup>Staples, 'Ancestors', p. 357. For example, sexual sins were condemned because of their attack on family structure: Taylor, Primal Vision, p. 182.

<sup>105</sup>Hammond-Tooke, 'Worldview II', p. 359.

<sup>106</sup>Ilogu, Ibo Culture, p. 151.

<sup>107</sup>Hammond-Tooke, 'Worldview II', pp. 360-362.

<sup>108</sup>Soga, Ama-Xosa, pp. 146, 155-156; Hunter, Reaction to Conquest, p. 274; Hammond-Tooke, 'Worldview I', pp. 335-339, 348.

<sup>109</sup>Wilson, Transformation, pp. 77-79.

<sup>110</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 27-32.

<sup>111</sup>Taylor, Primal Vision, p. 190; Tempels, Bantu Philosophy, p. 127; Wilson, Transformation, p.28; Shorter, African Culture, p. 63; Hammond-Tooke, 'Worldview II', p. 346.

guardians of morality in African society.<sup>112</sup>

Suffering that was not explained by the wrath of the ancestors was attributed to witchcraft.<sup>113</sup> Generally speaking, less serious misfortune would be attributed to the ancestors, while serious illnesses or untimely death were ascribed to witches or sorcerers.<sup>114</sup> The Xhosa believed that such attitudes as hatred, anger, and envy moved beyond the self to act as independent agents that could transmit harmful power of their own.<sup>115</sup> If one man cursed another who subsequently took sick, the cause of the illness was not the curse itself but the emotion behind it.<sup>116</sup> It was when such unconfessed feelings were allowed to fester that they could seize a person<sup>117</sup> who would use magic deliberately to harm others.<sup>118</sup> The person possessing this power was considered a witch or sorcerer<sup>119</sup> and was feared because s/he was outside humanity.<sup>120</sup> The ancestors were unable to provide help against the power of witches,<sup>121</sup> which accounts for the horror

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<sup>112</sup>Ronald M. Green, 'Religion and Morality in the African Traditional Setting', Journal of Religion in Africa 16 (1) 1983, p. 11.

<sup>113</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>114</sup>The purpose of the ancestors was to perpetuate their lineage, which through worship sustained them. Thus misfortune was sent to punish wrongdoing, that is, to restore and not to destroy: Staples, 'Ancestors', p. 154.

<sup>115</sup>Taylor, Primal Vision, pp. 45, 183, 190; Tempels, Bantu Philosophy, pp. 104-105; Wilson, Transformation, p. 88; Shorter, African Culture, p. 64.

<sup>116</sup>Tempels, Bantu Philosophy, p. 112.

<sup>117</sup>Ibid., p. 128; cf. Gray, Black Christians and White Missionaries, p. 5.

<sup>118</sup>Tempels, Bantu Philosophy, p. 68; Stephen O. Okafor, 'Bantu Philosophy: Placide Tempels Revisited', Journal of Religion in Africa 13 (2) 1982, pp. 95-96.

<sup>119</sup>Hammond-Tooke differentiates between witches and sorcerers: witches were women born to psychic, personalized power who used 'familiar' such as baboons and 'thikoloshe' to injure others; sorcerers were men who were not born to their role but used magical substances to cause harm: 'Worldview I', pp. 337-338; cf. Hunter, Reaction to Conquest, pp. 275-276, 290.

<sup>120</sup>Taylor, Primal Vision, p. 190.

<sup>121</sup>Hunter, Reaction to Conquest, p. 234.

with which witchcraft was viewed.

The diviner discerned, through an elaborate ceremony, whom the community suspected of witchcraft.<sup>122</sup> Anyone who diverged widely from the social norm would be in danger of being accused, which made for social stability.<sup>123</sup> The accused would thus typically be those who were eccentric<sup>124</sup> or socially isolated,<sup>125</sup> as demonstrated by wealth (harbouring greed)<sup>126</sup> or an obnoxious or quarrelsome personality.<sup>127</sup> Witchcraft accusations brought latent tensions into focus and were found where discord and jealousy existed.<sup>128</sup> Accusations between co-wives and in-laws were the most common,<sup>129</sup> the latter being due probably to the exogamous marriages among the Cape Nguni which made the wife a complete 'outsider' to the family.<sup>130</sup>

The diviner was not infallible but was limited by the judgment already made by

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<sup>122</sup>Soga, Ama-Xosa, pp. 169-172; Hunter, Reaction to Conquest, pp. 310, 344.

<sup>123</sup>Hunter, Reaction to Conquest, p. 317.

<sup>124</sup>Wilson, Transformation, p. 22.

<sup>125</sup>J.B. Peires, 'A History of the Xhosa, 1700-1835' (Rhodes University, M.A. thesis, 1976), p. 78.

<sup>126</sup>Hunter, Reaction to Conquest, pp. 384-385.

<sup>127</sup>Wilson, Transformation, p. 83. An accusation was also an effective political weapon which a chief like Hintsu could use to confiscate cattle and thereby effectively check the power of ambitious councillors: J.B. Peires, 'Chiefs and Commoners in Precolonial Xhosa Society' in Before and After Shaka - Papers in Nguni History, J.B. Peires, ed. (Grahamstown, 1981), pp. 134, 137; Rose, Four Years, p. 143. H.H. Dugmore dubbed this function of the witchcraft accusation 'the Kafir state engine for the removal of the obnoxious': H.H. Dugmore, 'Rev. H.H. Dugmore's Papers', in A Compendium of Kafir Laws and Customs, J. Maclean, ed. (Mount Coke, 1858), p. 27.

<sup>128</sup>Hunter, Reaction to Conquest, pp. 307-308.

<sup>129</sup>Hammond-Tooke, 'Worldview II', pp. 356-358.

<sup>130</sup>Hunter, Reaction to Conquest, p. 43; Eleanor Preston-Whyte, 'Kinship and Marriage' in The Bantu-Speaking Peoples of Southern Africa, W.D. Hammond-Tooke, ed. (London, 1974), p. 204.

those present.<sup>131</sup> Once 'smelled out' as a witch, the person would be tortured and would either die or be allowed to escape.<sup>132</sup> Divination was thus a means of symbolic control over the environment, and retribution for wrong behaviour was meted out in this life.

As mentioned previously, the missionaries were not well-acquainted with African culture. They assumed that the Africans did not have a concept of sin, as Shrewsbury made clear: 'As to Morality, neither the theory nor practice thereof were discernible amongst them in their native state.'<sup>133</sup> The Wesleyans did not recognize that Africans were well aware of the reality of evil which they sensed within themselves and which they believed was embodied in witches and sorcerers.<sup>134</sup> Dating back to van der Kemp, the early evangelists did not understand the crucial distinction between diviners and witches.<sup>135</sup> They accordingly viewed diviners' methods as 'vanity and inefficacy'<sup>136</sup> or as 'superstitious'.<sup>137</sup>

In the absence of elaborate rituals and a dogmatized belief system that could be opposed, rainmaking ceremonies and witchcraft accusations provided the evangelists with a tangible focus for their attack on African culture. The Wesleyan correspondence

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<sup>131</sup>Hunter, Reaction to Conquest, pp. 344-347. If the accused had substantial support among the people, the diviner would be unable to convict him/her: Peires, 'Chiefs and Commers', pp. 134-135.

<sup>132</sup>Many of these people fled to mission stations.

<sup>133</sup>W.M.S., Shrewsbury to Secretaries, 30 June 1831.

<sup>134</sup>Hammond-Tooke, 'Worldview II', p. 318. The prophet Ntsikana underscored this when he asked, 'What is witchcraft but [the badness of] the heart of man?': cited in Peires, House of Phalo, p. 72.

<sup>135</sup>Van der Kemp, Transactions, p. 432. This is partially due to the linguistic similarity: *igqira* (diviner) and *igqwira* (witch). Cf. Shaw, My Mission, pp. 189-190.

<sup>136</sup>W.M.S., 3 June 1830 Kay journal extract, 21 June 1830.

<sup>137</sup>W.M.S., 22 March 1826 Kay journal extract, 1 April 1826.

records many incidents of witchcraft accusations and torture.<sup>138</sup> Because they did not wish to encourage the Xhosa in witchcraft beliefs, the missionaries avoided mentioning that it was referred to in the Bible:

On this account we seldom think it prudent to state all that the Scriptures would warrant us to believe on this point, lest the admission of truth inadequately apprehended by them, should serve to fortify them in their error.<sup>139</sup>

The evangelists detailed their confrontations with diviners, at which the missionaries sought to expose and humiliate them.<sup>140</sup> The Wesleyans did not realize that in criticizing diviners they were attacking the moral values of African traditional society.<sup>141</sup>

In addition, the missionaries sometimes misunderstood the fear of witchcraft displayed by Africans. They interpreted this as a fear of being accused<sup>142</sup> when in fact it was a fear of being bewitched.<sup>143</sup> Shrewsbury was one who did understand this fear:

they are held in perpetual terror by a fear of witchcraft, firmly believing, as they universally do, that individuals of both sexes amongst themselves

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<sup>138</sup>W.M.S., 10 September 1826 Kay journal extract, 29 September 1826; *ibid.*, 19 October & 13 November 1826 Kay journal extracts, January 1827; *ibid.*, Young to Secretaries, 26 August & 12 November 1829; Ayliff Journal, 30 & 31 October 1830, 15 August & 17 September 1832, 16 July 1833; Shrewsbury Journal, 16 December 1826, 17 February 1828, 9 January 1829. While many of these accounts were no doubt authentic due to their eyewitness nature, many reports were accepted on hearsay. Ayliff reported one incident where a man was supposedly tortured for bewitching Hintsá; this account is later corrected to reflect that the man only suffered the loss of his cattle: Ayliff Journal, 10 November 1830.

<sup>139</sup>W.M.S., Shrewsbury to Secretaries, 30 June 1831.

<sup>140</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 17 March & 23-25 November 1831; *Missionary Notices* 202 (1832), Ayliff to Secretaries, 8 March 1832, pp. 157-158; Ayliff Journal, 27 December 1830 & 22 July 1831; Steedman, *Wanderings*, pp. 229-233.

<sup>141</sup>Williams, 'Missionaries', pp. 314-318. A denial of witchcraft in Xhosa society was tantamount to a denial of the existence of evil: Wilson, *Transformation*, p. 38.

<sup>142</sup>Ayliff claimed that the Xhosa built temporary dwellings so as to be able to flee witchcraft accusations: W.M.S., Ayliff to Secretaries, 1 July 1834.

<sup>143</sup>Soga states that they did not believe they themselves were guilty of witchcraft but were willing to believe it of others: *Ama-Xosa*, pp. 87, 172.

have the power of exercising a secret and invisible evil influence upon their persons and property, to whose malignity they invariably ascribe all ills they meet with throughout life.<sup>144</sup>

However, Shrewsbury did not make the connection that witchcraft was evil behaviour personified. Clues given by converts were disregarded, as when one woman stated, 'A witch was in my heart. But the word of God came into my heart, and caused the witch to go out.'<sup>145</sup> Another convert, in relating her 'old ways', said

'I was a believer in witchcraft; I was much afraid of being bewitched: but now that I have thrown away my old ways, I no longer fear witchcraft; I believe that while God takes care of me, no man can hurt me with anything.'<sup>146</sup>

Witchcraft continued to be a concern for converts. When a number of them discovered that a fellow member had indulged in sin, they banished him in a manner intriguingly similar to a 'smelling-out':

Today, the case mentioned above was brought before me by the people, and the man having been proved guilty, I spoke to him on the wickedness of his conduct, and showed the awful consequences of the same, but the man appearing an hardened sinner, we decided that it was best to expel him from the station, and the people to show their hatred of sin, gave the man his things, and then burnt his house to the ground.<sup>147</sup>

Had the missionaries realized how real the fear of witchcraft and awareness of evil were among the Xhosa, they would have been able to apprise their hearers of the power of Christianity over wickedness and sorcerers. By equating witchcraft with superstition, this deep-seated fear was not recognized or addressed.<sup>148</sup>

Just as the missionaries had few problems convincing people to pray, so they did

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<sup>144</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 9 December 1826.

<sup>145</sup>Calderwood, *Caffres and Caffre Missions*, p. 79.

<sup>146</sup>*Missionary Notices* 193 (1832), 15 May 1831 Ayliff journal extract, p. 8.

<sup>147</sup>W.M.S., 10 September 1833 Ayliff journal extract, 30 December 1833. The homesteads of 'witches' were razed by fire: Hammond-Tooke, 'Worldview II', p. 357.

<sup>148</sup>Staples, 'Ancestors', p. 212.

not experience difficulties in persuading them to express their awareness of sin since it already existed. The emotionalism exhibited in services was in part a mourning and weeping over the bitterness or greed that they harboured. As one penitent man stated, 'Sin is a great thing and I feel it in my heart, which is very sore on this account'.<sup>149</sup> Many others were similarly 'awakened to a sense of their sinfulness' and were as a result 'earnestly seeking salvation'.<sup>150</sup>

But a consciousness of sin was not enough, as one woman pointed out: 'These words' (said she with much emphasis) 'must not stop in our ears: they must have a dwelling place in our hearts.'<sup>151</sup> As the records show, the penetration of the message to the 'heart', that is, its translation into action through conversion, rarely occurred. This was because the definition of wrong behaviour as propagated by the missionaries was quite different from the understanding of the Africans.

In contrast to the African concept of wrongs being committed against the community, the missionaries stressed that individual sins were committed against God.<sup>152</sup> The missionaries addressed the problem of sin by promoting rigid adherence to principles which - although they did not recognize this - were defined more by the society from which they came than by the Bible itself. The missionaries were of an evangelical background which, in reaction to Enlightenment ideas, put sin to the

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<sup>149</sup>W.M.S., 18 June 1828 J. Davis journal extract, 16 July 1828; cf. *ibid.*, 12 August 1826 Kay journal extract, 25 August 1826.

<sup>150</sup>W.M.S., 20 March 1825 Shaw journal extract, April 1825; *ibid.*, Young to Secretaries, 31 [sic] April 1828; *ibid.*, Shrewsbury to Secretaries, 30 September 1830; *Missionary Notices* 193 (1832), Ayliff to Secretaries, 28 May 1831, p. 7.

<sup>151</sup>W.M.S., 16 April 1826 Kay journal extract, 30 July 1826.

<sup>152</sup>Staples, 'Ancestors', p. 155. One convert stated, '...feeling not that I had sinned against him, I knew not why I ought to weep...': W.M.S., 8 August 1830 Kay journal extract, August 1830.

forefront of the religious mind.<sup>153</sup> Much emphasis was placed on 'respectability' which prescribed dress, spiritual conduct, and severe and suspicious attitudes toward entertainments like cards, dances, music, and theatre.<sup>154</sup> These views had considerable influence in Britain to the extent that by the 1830's, laws on Sunday observance and blasphemy had been passed.<sup>155</sup>

One of the most common sermons the Wesleyans preached while itinerating in Xhosaland was the keeping of the sabbath. Once people were assembled to hear the 'great word', they were taught the 'nature and duties of the Lord's Day'.<sup>156</sup> People were sometimes forced to observe the sabbath:

A woman and her daughter were going by [the station] with seed-corn while we were in the Sunday School. We stopt her, and took away the corn, as no one is allowed to carry any burden through the mission station on the Sabbath. She was therefore compelled to stay and hear the word, and on the morrow the corn was returned to her.<sup>157</sup>

After missionary pressure, the Gqunukhwebe chiefs proclaimed in 1833 that the sabbath had to be observed among their people.<sup>158</sup> The Ten Commandments were read at every service and were responded to by the congregation which was, to Kay, 'much more affecting, than it is possible to express'.<sup>159</sup> As most of the people who heard this had

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<sup>153</sup>Best, 'Evangelicalism', p. 38.

<sup>154</sup>Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>155</sup>Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>156</sup>W.M.S., 19 February 1826 Kay journal extract, 1 April 1826; *ibid.*, 29 October 1826 Kay journal extract, January 1827; *ibid.*, 4 July 1830 Kay journal extract, August 1830; Shrewsbury Journal, 25 October 1829.

<sup>157</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 23 October 1831. Shrewsbury refused a gift of milk from one of Hintsas's wives on the sabbath, stating that he did not wish it to appear that he was purchasing it from her: *ibid.*, 1 July 1827. Shrewsbury and Shaw told the Xhosa not to dance on the sabbath, while Kay rebuked them for holding a marriage feast on that day: W.M.S., 29 January 1825 Shaw journal extract, April 1825; *ibid.*, 3 September 1826 Kay journal extract, 29 September 1826; Shrewsbury Journal, 8 June 1828.

<sup>158</sup>Steedman, *Wanderings*, p. 51.

<sup>159</sup>W.M.S., Kay to Secretaries, March 1827.

not yet been exposed to the Gospel, this message offered little more than rules.

Due to their lack of familiarity with the African way of life, missionaries throughout Africa forbade and discouraged beliefs and practices which they believed were bad or of which they were uncertain.<sup>160</sup> Kay, for example, pointed out to his listeners the 'sinfulness and danger of many of their pagan customs'<sup>161</sup> although he did not specify which customs were not 'sinful'. Ayliff was more direct in telling his hearers

to put away this thing [circumcision] as well as all the other customs of the Caffres, which were either evil in themselves, or accompanied with evil circumstances.<sup>162</sup>

In Xhosaland, there were sexual activities associated with many festivities such as weddings and initiations, which caused missionaries to forbid their converts to attend.<sup>163</sup> Many activities integral to the social life of the community were thus proscribed, with dancing, singing, and feasting topping the list.<sup>164</sup> William Shaw interrupted one wedding ceremony to gather the dancers around him, upon which he 'bore as strong a testimony as I could against Sabbath breaking, dancing, lasciviousness, and polygamy, to which they all listened with attention'.<sup>165</sup>

Missionary teachings on sin did not go unchallenged by African listeners. Shrewsbury was asked 'whether the trees or cattle had committed sin, as they were sometimes smitten with lightning'.<sup>166</sup> He also noticed that.

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<sup>160</sup>Shorter, African Culture, p. 70.

<sup>161</sup>Missionary Notices 141 (1827), 10 October 1826 Kay journal extract, p. 325.

<sup>162</sup>Ayliff Journal, 2 March 1834.

<sup>163</sup>Hunter, Reaction to Conquest, pp. 180-184.

<sup>164</sup>A similar attitude was still espoused by Church Missionary Society evangelists in East Africa many years later: Beidelman, Colonial Evangelism, pp. 133-137.

<sup>165</sup>Shaw, Journal, 15 March 1829 extract, p. 153.

<sup>166</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 11-15 September 1832.

as in many other places so here also the question was asked, why, seeing the Devil was the first sinner, the Almighty did not kill him, and so make an example and an end of sin at once?<sup>167</sup>

Many Xhosa claimed that because God had not given them his law to enable them to distinguish between good and evil, they were not responsible to Him for wrongdoing.<sup>168</sup>

What caused particular confusion among Africans was the discrepancy between what the missionaries taught and what they observed other whites doing. Europeans often travelled or worked in Xhosaland on the sabbath,<sup>169</sup> which Mqhayi used as an excuse for fighting on that day.<sup>170</sup> When Chief Bhotomane was told not to drink, he exclaimed, 'Englishmen get drunk, and why should not we? Is it more dangerous for us than for them?'<sup>171</sup> The nearby residence of Europeans, such as the outlaw Nicholas Lochenberg,<sup>172</sup> did little to solve this missionary quandary.

Not only was the message negative in that it emphasized legalism, but failure to adhere to it could result in severe consequences. On one occasion when the people refused to leave their work on a Sunday to hear Young preach, he threatened that God would punish them for it. They subsequently listened to his sermon.<sup>173</sup> Shrewsbury told a woman that she was starving because she had been working on the sabbath after being

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<sup>167</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 16 March 1831; cf. Moodie, Ten Years, pp. 255-256; Steedman, Wanderings, p. 27; Young, Missionary Narrative, pp. 73-74; Shaw, My Mission, pp. 74-75.

<sup>168</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 16 March 1831 & 13-17 August 1832; cf. Shrewsbury Journal, 7 January 1829; 13 April 1830 Kay journal extract, 24 April 1830.

<sup>169</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 19 July 1829 & 11 November 1832; cf. Williams, 'Missionaries', p. 195.

<sup>170</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 1 October 1831. Shrewsbury did not reprove the chief for fighting but for doing it on the sabbath.

<sup>171</sup>Missionary Notices 178 (1830), 29 November 1829 Kay journal extract, p. 343.

<sup>172</sup>Shaw, Journal, 25 June 1828 extract, pp. 128-129; W.M.S., Shrewsbury to Secretaries, 12 July 1827; Kay, Travels, 24 May 1830 journal extract, p. 283.

<sup>173</sup>W.M.S., 15 November 1829 Young journal extract, 5 January 1830.

told not to<sup>174</sup> while another man heard that his sickness 'was no doubt a special warning and call from God'.<sup>175</sup> Upon being told that God was everywhere, one man was puzzled:

'Then,' said he, 'if God be such a person, why does He allow me so often to be without food?' I replied, 'Men are very wicked, and sin against God; and therefore God takes away their food to punish them, to make them sorry for their sins, and to make them know that He is God.'<sup>176</sup>

A lack of rain was also characterized by the missionaries as evidence of God's fury,<sup>177</sup> and their sermons were littered with other warnings to 'flee from the wrath to come' (see Appendix). When a comet generated much 'anxious inquiry' among the Xhosa, Kay told them of the

wisdom and power of Him who formed those blazing glories; which, were he to allow to come out of their place, would consume us all as stubble.<sup>178</sup>

Trying to convince the people that they should approach God consequently proved difficult. A Xhosa convert had problems persuading another African to embrace Christianity, for he remarked,

since such punishments were in reserve for those who neglected the laws of the master whom they engaged to serve, he preferred enjoying the world as much as he could while living, rather than becoming a subject of one whose laws were irksome, and whose punishments were so terrible.<sup>179</sup>

After visiting Xhosaland mission stations during the 1840's, Harriet Ward remarked on how God was portrayed:

I think the creed of many who profess to explain the Word of God, a fearful one: instead of holding up our beneficent Creator as a Being

<sup>174</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 24 August 1828.

<sup>175</sup>W.M.S., Shaw to Secretaries, 27 February 1825.

<sup>176</sup>Shaw, My Mission, pp. 68-69.

<sup>177</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 29 October 1827.

<sup>178</sup>W.M.S., 18 October 1825 Kay journal extract, 20 October 1825.

<sup>179</sup>Ward, Five Years, vol. 1, pp. 117-118.

worthy to be served for love, they dwell too much on the punishment of sin, rather than on the reward of virtue. It is by some deemed wiser to frighten the ignorant into serving God, than to lead them by gentle means to love Him...<sup>180</sup>

The Wesleyans thus erred in assuming that their listeners had no consciousness of evil nor prohibitions against wrongful conduct. They ignored the words of one of Ntsikana's converts, who said,

'This Word too regards as evil those things that we have always regarded as evil: theft, adultery, killing, lying and many other abominations as enumerated in Leviticus 18:6-30.'<sup>181</sup>

The manifestations of this awareness, such as belief in witchcraft and in the wrath of ancestors, were disregarded.<sup>182</sup> The missionaries did not build on the existing African understanding and demonstrate that Christianity could deal with evil on a personal and societal level. Instead, an alternative system was presented. This consisted of a forbiddance of celebrations and adherence to a new set of unfamiliar principles, such as the keeping of the sabbath. Their great need, namely a fear of witchcraft, was overlooked and made Christianity appear irrelevant.

### The Afterlife

Every society must deal with the reality of death. Christianity presents a utopian afterlife which is free from the suffering and anxiety on earth. The missionary message assumed that all men had a fear of death and would therefore respond positively when told that heaven awaited those who had found and followed the way provided by Jesus Christ. This supposition depended upon two factors: first, that the society targeted

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<sup>180</sup>Ibid., pp. 118-119.

<sup>181</sup>Jordan, Towards an African Literature, p. 49; cf. Smith, African Ideas of God, pp. 87-88.

<sup>182</sup>Purification from evil was a dominant theme during future revivals among Xhosa Christians: Wilson, Transformation, p. 43.

conceived of death as complete separation from life and second, that death was consequently feared. Neither was true of African society.

The ancestor cult was the principal element of traditional African religion: it sanctioned every important activity and social relationship.<sup>183</sup> The ancestors were spirits of dead members of a clan or lineage who were consulted in matters pertaining to the living and were addressed through sacrifice, prayer, and confession.<sup>184</sup> The ancestors communicated their wishes to their descendants through visions or dreams.<sup>185</sup> It was a relationship of reciprocity between living and dead:<sup>186</sup> the living ensured that appropriate rituals were followed to maintain the benevolence of the ancestors, rituals which nurtured the ancestors. If behaviour of the living was incorrect, as seen when 'pollution' occurred or when relationships were jeopardized, punishment was forthcoming.<sup>187</sup> The cult of the ancestors was utilitarian - the salvation sought related to blessings and advantages in the present life.<sup>188</sup> It was profoundly this-worldly in that

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<sup>183</sup>Staples, 'Ancestors', p. 58.

<sup>184</sup>Wilson, Transformation, p. 27. For detailed descriptions of the ancestor cult, see Hammond-Tooke, 'Worldview I', pp. 325-339 and Hunter, Reaction to Conquest, pp. 227-268.

<sup>185</sup>Hammond-Tooke, 'Worldview I', p. 332; Taylor, Primal Vision, p. 56; Hunter, Reaction to Conquest, p. 24; Soga, Ama-Xosa, pp. 156-157. For extensive descriptions of such dreams, see Callaway, Amazulu, pp. 6, 146-147, 160-164, 228-252. The prevalence of ancestor dreams influenced hearers of the Gospel, many of whom had vivid dreams of death and God: W.M.S., 1 June 1830 Kay journal extract, 21 June 1830; Shrewsbury Journal, 19 February 1828; Ayliff Journal, 5 March 1834. They particularly saw visions of their sins, as with one man who said that 'the Lord had placed his sins in battle array against him while engaged in prayer': W.M.S., 14 August 1826 Kay journal extract, 25 August 1826; cf. *ibid.*, 3 & 5 September 1826 Kay journal extracts, 29 September 1826.

<sup>186</sup>Tempels, Bantu Philosophy, pp. 159-160; Staples, 'Ancestors', pp. 67, 92, 105-106.

<sup>187</sup>Green, 'Religion and Morality', pp. 5-8; Hunter, Reaction to Conquest, pp. 227-268. The relationship between living and dead tended however to be characterized by love, not fear: Shorter, African Culture, pp. 59-60.

<sup>188</sup>Staples, 'Ancestors', pp. 90, 120; Taylor, Primal Vision, p. 107.

the world of the dead centred on the earth.<sup>189</sup>

The ancestor cult gave Africans a practical solution to the problem of death<sup>190</sup> which contrasted with the Western one. Life was seen as a series of successive stages, each carrying special status and roles. Upon being circumcised, for example, a boy received a new name and was expected to alter his behaviour according to his new responsibilities.<sup>191</sup> Death was such a rite of passage: the old died, the new was born.<sup>192</sup> Death was therefore not a distinct cessation of life but a continuation in another form.<sup>193</sup> Because death did not mean extinction, the ancestor cult took the sting out of death and it is therefore not as shocking in traditional African society as in the Western individualistic tradition.<sup>194</sup>

Some time after death, the deceased was ritually installed as an ancestor if s/he qualified.<sup>195</sup> Much importance was accordingly placed on having descendants who would remember and nurture you after life, not on what sort of conditions awaited. Harvey Cox summarized it as follows:

To live here and now is the most important concern of African religious activities and beliefs. There is little, if any, concern with the distinctly spiritual welfare of man apart from his physical life...Even life hereafter is conceived in materialistic and physical terms. There is neither paradise to be hoped for nor hell to be feared in the hereafter. The soul of man does not long for spiritual redemption, or for closer contact with God in

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<sup>189</sup>Tempels, Bantu Philosophy, pp. 64-65; Staples, 'Ancestors', p. 179.

<sup>190</sup>Tempels, Bantu Philosophy, pp. 17-18.

<sup>191</sup>Soga gives a full description of how this process took place in circumcision rituals: Ama-Xosa, pp. 248-257.

<sup>192</sup>Staples, 'Ancestors', pp. 128-138, 169, 171.

<sup>193</sup>The word for ancestral spirit among the Mpondo (*ithongo*) referred to an ancestor or a powerful living relative: Wilson, Transformation, p. 28.

<sup>194</sup>Staples, 'Ancestors', pp. 127, 225.

<sup>195</sup>This was dependent on lineage, social status, social role, parenthood, gender, and proper burial: Staples, 'Ancestors', p. 116.

the next world...<sup>196</sup>

There was hence no articulated belief - if indeed there was any belief - concerning the sort of world the ancestors inhabited<sup>197</sup> and certainly no concept of retribution for past wrongs in the afterlife.<sup>198</sup> It was thought that the ancestors lived 'underneath',<sup>199</sup> an idea that changed to 'above' after considerable exposure to Christian teachings.<sup>200</sup>

There is only one reference to the ancestor cult in the Wesleyan missionary correspondence to 1835. Ayliff described the belief in ancestors and labelled them 'umshulugu',<sup>201</sup> which in present-day usage means 'ghost' or 'phantom'. Soga and Hunter described the *umshologu* as being an evil manifestation of the ancestors and Lichtenstein termed it an evil spirit.<sup>202</sup> While it is possible that Ayliff may have used the wrong term, it is more likely that this word was later superseded by the words *iminyanya* or *izinyanya* in use today.<sup>203</sup> After reporting these beliefs, Ayliff concluded that the 'umshulugu' was

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<sup>196</sup>Cited in Shorter, African Culture, p. 52.

<sup>197</sup>Wauchope was told by his grandmother, who had known van der Kemp, 'We know something about death and we know that our ancestors are living somewhere, but we could not tell where': Wauchope, Missionaries, p. 21; cf. Staples, 'Ancestors', pp. 84, 115, 142; Moodie, Ten Years, vol. 2, p. 241; Hammond-Tooke, 'Worldview I', p. 319; Hunter, Reaction to Conquest, p. 232; Gray, Black Christians and White Missionaries, pp. 67-68.

<sup>198</sup>Shorter, African Culture, p. 63. Rewards and penalties were apportioned in the 'here and now': Hammond-Tooke, 'Worldview II', p. 318.

<sup>199</sup>Hammond-Tooke, 'Worldview I', p. 328.

<sup>200</sup>Wilson, Transformation, p. 47.

<sup>201</sup>Ayliff Journal, 8 & 27 January 1834 and 5 July 1834; W.M.S., Ayliff to Secretaries, 1 July 1834.

<sup>202</sup>Soga, Ama-Xosa, pp. 166-167; Hunter, Reaction to Conquest, p. 263; Lichtenstein, Travels, p. 255.

<sup>203</sup>Godlonton reported that the 'invisible world' was called *umshologu* by the frontier tribes and *umnyanya* by the 'back tribes', an observation supported by Shaw: Godlonton, Irruption, p. 230; Shaw, My Mission, p. 195. Shaw always referred to the ancestral spirits as *imishologu*: *ibid.*, pp. 172, 174, 192-194. J.C. Warner and Rose also termed the ancestors *imishologu* as did Kropf in his dictionary many years later: J.C. Warner, 'Mr. Warner's Notes', in A Compendium of Kafir Laws and Customs, J. Maclean, comp.

'harmless in its effect on society at large'.<sup>204</sup> This reveals the extent to which the evangelists were unaware of one of the central principles of the African belief system, although this meant that missionaries did not openly attack the ancestor cult at this time.

Death and life thereafter were the central topics of missionary sermons (see Appendix).<sup>205</sup> Though the concepts of heaven, hell, and their respective punishments or rewards were alien to Africa,<sup>206</sup> they were constantly preached in the expectation that fear of both was familiar to the Xhosa.<sup>207</sup> When those close to death were abandoned in the forest, the missionaries took this as evidence of African fear of death<sup>208</sup> - it was in actuality fear of the pollution or 'uncleanness' of death which could harm the living.<sup>209</sup> The missionaries faced opposition when they asked Xhosa to help them bury the dead due to the fear of impurity. Some men told Stephen Kay,

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(Mount Coke, 1858), pp. 87, 96; Rose, Four Years, pp. 81, 144-145; Albert Kropf, A Kafir-English Dictionary (Lovedale, 1899).

<sup>204</sup>W.M.S., Ayliff to Secretaries, 1 July 1834.

<sup>205</sup>The missionary preoccupation with death must have disconcerted Africans; no comment on this was recorded at Mount Coke or Butterworth, but a Wesleyan missionary to the Tswana reported his listeners as saying that 'the conversation of the missionaries makes us uncomfortable, they talk to us of another world and we cannot sleep for thinking about dying': Slee, 'Wesleyan Methodism', p. 34.

<sup>206</sup>Green, 'Religion and Morality', p. 3.

<sup>207</sup>Their supposed horror of death throughout life was reiterated by Kropf many years later: Xosa-Kaffern, p. 92.

<sup>208</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 25 September 1829: 'From a dread of death and of the dying, sick persons when in the last stage of sickness, are very frequently dragged out of their houses, and left alone to struggle with the last Enemy.'

<sup>209</sup>Hunter, Reaction to Conquest, p. 231; Moodie, Ten Years, p. 270; Backhouse, Narrative, p. 213; Staples, 'Ancestors', p. 172. Many circumstances could pollute a person, be it lightning, death, menses, being wounded by a lion, etc. Customs were observed to avoid pollution and when it occurred, rituals were necessary to cleanse oneself: Lichtenstein, Travels, pp. 257-259; Alberti, Life and Customs, pp. 48, 92; Soga, Ama-Xosa, pp. 296-297. Their fear may also have been based on the social disruption that death brought: Staples, 'Ancestors', p. 199.

'the place where he lies I dare not approach!'...'We are too young to behold the corpse of an old and great warrior'...'I have already fled from my dwelling that I might not hear the sound of the warrior's death: how then can I go and dig a hole to put his body in?'<sup>210</sup>

Because there was little speculation as to the abode of the dead, it is more precise to speak of African uncertainty concerning death than fear of it.<sup>211</sup> Upon the death of one man, his widows informed the missionary, 'we do not know where he is gone: but our Teacher must know, and must pray for us'.<sup>212</sup>

Central to missionary teachings on death was the belief in a soul which was spiritual, an entity completely separate from the physical self which lived on after corporeal death. Among the Cape Nguni, there was no clear distinction between soul-shadow-body and no theory as to what became the ancestral spirit after death.<sup>213</sup>

William Shaw encountered difficulties in conveying his Western concepts:

Even respecting the soul, at its departure from the body at the time of death, they enquired whether it would ultimately become a 'human being' - meaning hereby whether it would be capable of thought and of action of which they appeared to be in doubt in consequence of its separation from its bodily members.<sup>214</sup>

To convince listeners of the horrors of hell, therefore, the missionaries first had to persuade them of the existence of the soul. Ayliff stated that most of his conversations revolved around this:

'What are you looking for?' - for you I am looking, to which they replied 'He! What do you want with me?' - 'I want your soul. Because your soul

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<sup>210</sup>Missionary Notices 136 (1827), 7 July 1826 Kay journal extract, p. 245. Shrewsbury remarked several years later that interment of the deceased was becoming much more frequent: Shrewsbury Journal, 19-22 November 1832.

<sup>211</sup>Gray, Black Christians and White Missionaries, pp. 67-68. The basis of African religion was not fear but concern for the maintenance and salvation of life: Okafor, 'Placide Tempels Revisited', pp. 89, 91.

<sup>212</sup>W.M.S., 7 July 1826 Kay journal extract, 30 July 1826.

<sup>213</sup>Hammond-Tooke, 'Worldview I', p. 326.

<sup>214</sup>Shaw, Journal, 19 February 1828 extract, p. 100.

is a great thing. It is a thing that will never be done,' upon this they sit to hear...<sup>215</sup>

The idea did not go unchallenged, as with one man who expressed frank scepticism:

'How can that be?' As the Kaffers never bury their dead, he continued, 'We see and know that the wolf eats him up, and how then can he go to God?' We pointed out the distinction between the body and the soul of which the objector had no previous conception...<sup>216</sup>

These teachings on the soul excited many questions: 'They would ask when did we get a soul - will the soul always live - what are we now to do since you tell us these things.'<sup>217</sup>

The missionaries recorded that some Africans accepted the belief in a soul.

When one man expressed great interest in the Gospel, Ayliff said,

...you must believe you have a soul. 'This thing,' said he, 'I do believe, I know I have got a soul; - I love my soul, therefore I am come to be taught how I may save my soul.'<sup>218</sup>

These reports, however, must be treated carefully. As there was no word in Xhosa to express this Western concept, the missionaries used the Xhosa word for 'breath' (*umphefumlo*) to communicate 'soul'. When the Xhosa then referred to their 'souls' it may very well have been, as in the last quote cited, that the man was expressing concern for his physical well-being or the extension of his lifespan. After considerable exposure to Christian teachings, however, the Western concept seems to have been grasped by some. One woman stated that she became a Christian because 'I thought then to die is nothing, but the soul if that should be lost, that is great, I will therefore seek the

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<sup>215</sup>Ayliff Journal, 28 July 1833.

<sup>216</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 7 December 1826.

<sup>217</sup>Ayliff Journal, 9 November 1830.

<sup>218</sup>Ayliff Journal, 5 March 1834. This sentiment was voiced by others: *Missionary Notices* 136 (1827), 20 June 1826 Kay journal extract, p. 244; *ibid.*, 142 (1827), 19 October 1827 Kay journal extract, p. 337.

Lord.<sup>219</sup>

For those who did not face a crisis or imminent death, the promise of future rewards held little appeal. One woman was content with her life:

The interpreters now judiciously reminded her of death, and alluded to the immortality of her soul. But of this doctrine she had evidently heard very little before now, or otherwise it had never occupied her thoughts.<sup>220</sup>

An additional problem that occurred with teachings on heaven was the issue of where the Africans' forefathers had gone, which was addressed by one man who said, 'My father and mother never heard this word, for they died far away. Tell me where they now are? in which place in the world?'<sup>221</sup> It is significant that Ayliff records no answer - it is a theological question still under debate.

There is evidence that the Wesleyans were able to convince some of their hearers of the horrors of judgment and hell. Those who were interested in the Gospel and were asked to join the catechumen class consistently displayed 'a sincere desire to flee from the wrath to come'<sup>222</sup> as did those who responded during a revival in 1831.<sup>223</sup> One convert was fairly typical when he stated 'that Hell stood before him, he was afraid of it, and wanted to serve God that he might escape it'.<sup>224</sup> One listener accepted the possibility of a Day of Judgment, but confidently believed that when the day would

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<sup>219</sup>Ayliff Journal, 25 March 1832. The woman was apparently 30 years old and from 'Zula Country'.

<sup>220</sup>Shaw, Journal, 6 May 1829 extract, p. 158.

<sup>221</sup>Ayliff Journal, 16 May 1832; cf. Young, Missionary Narrative, pp. 73-74; Wesleyan Reports (1824), Shaw letter, 10 April 1824, pp. 53-54.

<sup>222</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 13 May & 9 December 1828; Missionary Notices 189 (1831), Ayliff letter, 13 December 1830, p. 519; *ibid.*, 193 (1832), Ayliff letters of 28 May & 19 July 1831, p. 7; Ayliff Journal, 25 March 1832.

<sup>223</sup>Ayliff Journal, 15 & 17 July 1831. 'Revival' implies that complacent converts were reawakened; if so, those expressing fear of hell may have had considerable previous exposure to these teachings.

<sup>224</sup>Ayliff Journal, 14 July 1831.

come, he would flee to the missionary for help.<sup>225</sup>

For certain people, then, missionary teachings on the afterlife held much appeal. An ancestor was significant only if there was someone alive to remember him/her: if not, there was no further concern for that ancestor.<sup>226</sup> People who died childless were not always supplicated as ancestors, and childlessness was therefore tragic since it posed the threat of extinction.<sup>227</sup> This was probably the situation when the missionary preached to an old woman whose children had all died:

I told her that the souls of her children yet lived in another world, and that probably she would meet them there. This awakened her attention, and moved her feelings, so that she listened while I spoke of an eternal world, and of the judgement to come.<sup>228</sup>

To a woman without children whose rituals would sustain her after her death, the Gospel did indeed present a message of hope. This was vividly illustrated in a similar conversation that Shrewsbury had with a man in the same position. Shrewsbury's interpreter told him of

the immortality of the soul, and to assure him that the spirits yet lived in the invisible world, where all would one day meet. 'O', said the old man, you must not tell me so. Why, if that were true, it would make me weep for joy.'<sup>229</sup>

The idea of heaven, then, held an attraction particularly for those advanced in age.<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>225</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 5 July 1831.

<sup>226</sup>Staples, 'Ancestors', p. 67.

<sup>227</sup>Taylor, Primal Vision, p. 111; Tempels, Bantu Philosophy, p. 100. Hunter found that her Mpondo informants were unsure as to whether children and young persons became *amathongo*: Reaction to Conquest, p. 231.

<sup>228</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 22 October 1827.

<sup>229</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 12 December 1827.

<sup>230</sup>One old man told Shrewsbury, 'I wish to go to heaven; O that God would come and take me up to heaven': Shrewsbury Journal, 13 September 1829. Kay reported that a number of people who were 'sick and dying' were 'deeply impressed' with his sermon on the resurrection: W.M.S., 16 June 1830 Kay journal extract, 21 June 1830.

There was thus a spiritual need among the Xhosa for knowledge about life after death<sup>231</sup> which was reflected by some positive responses to Wesleyan teachings. Nonetheless it was a negative message: after death awaited judgment which could result in eternal banishment to hell. Fear was promoted as the motivating factor behind conversion, not a desire to draw closer to God and to enrich life. If quality of life on earth was of prime importance to the listener, the message had little impact: it was for those facing death that the message held the most appeal.

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<sup>231</sup>This was true throughout Africa: Gray, Black Christians and White Missionaries, pp. 68-69.

#### 4: AFRICAN PERCEPTIONS OF THE MISSIONARIES

##### Perceptions of the Missionary Character

The credibility of any message is inextricably linked with the trustworthiness of its messenger. Since no value was placed on written testimony in preliterate Xhosa society, the Xhosa had to examine the missionaries carefully in order to decide on their purpose and character. Once such initial judgments were formed, a framework was established within which an estimation of the content of the message could be made. H.H. Dugmore realized this when he remarked that the Gospel

cannot possibly carry to their minds that rational evidence of its own truth and Divinity which we know it to possess, and that hence they must receive it in a great measure on our word.<sup>1</sup>

The records consistently suggest that during the initial period of evangelization, the missionaries were regarded as both powerful and reputable.

The missionaries were perceived to possess mystical powers because they were associated with spiritual matters.<sup>2</sup> In this respect they were classified with war doctors (*itola*) such as Nxele:

...the mind of the Native has a strong bias towards the mystical, and the veneration for the missionary in the early period was not different to that shown to men like Nxele...<sup>3</sup>

They were consequently attributed with the power to bring rain. This very much embarrassed the preachers,<sup>4</sup> for they did not wish to be seen as the colleagues of African rain-makers. One diviner sought to cooperate with Shrewsbury much as he would have collaborated with a fellow diviner or herbalist:

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<sup>1</sup>W.M.S., Dugmore to Secretaries, 20 June 1834; cf. Moodie, Ten Years, p. 287.

<sup>2</sup>Williams, 'Missionaries', pp. 82-83.

<sup>3</sup>Wauchope, Missionaries, p. 39; cf. Lichtenstein, Travels, p. 253.

<sup>4</sup>W.M.S., 9 March 1826 Kay journal extract, 1 April 1826.

...the Doctor himself sought my friendship and accosted me with the familiar appellation of 'Umlingani wam' - my Mate or Companion. But I said to him in front of all the bystanders, 'What, your Mate, no, never the Mate of such a Servant of the Devil as thou art!'<sup>5</sup>

To be cast in the role of rain-makers created problems. During times of drought, the Wesleyans were continually requested to pray for rain.<sup>6</sup> When showers were not forthcoming, blame was placed on them by the rainmakers<sup>7</sup> and they were threatened with violence for withholding them.<sup>8</sup>

The Xhosa also believed that the missionaries were capable of 'bewitching' others with sickness. At both Mount Coke and Butterworth, rumours were rife that the deaths of a number of frontier chiefs had been brought about in this way.<sup>9</sup> Chief Bhotomane asked Kay,

'Pray, can you tell me why it is that the Caffre Chiefs are dying so fast? Islambi is dead! Dushani is dead! and now Gaika is dead! Enno is very ill; and I also am not well; pray what is it that is killing us all?'<sup>10</sup>

That such rumours gained currency is attested to by the blame laid on the missionaries for Mdushane's premature death at Mount Coke.<sup>11</sup> Hintsa refused to partake of refreshments with Ayliff and Cowper Rose as he had been told that his recent sickness

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<sup>5</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 23-25 November 1831. Said Kay, 'That such men should treat us with kindness and hospitality is truly matter of astonishment, seeing that the Gospel strikes at the very heart of their gains': W.M.S., 3 June 1830 Kay journal extract, 21 June 1830. Cf. N. Etherington, 'Missionary Doctors and African Healers in Mid-Victorian South Africa,' South African Historical Journal 19 (1987), p. 81.

<sup>6</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 4-9 November 1827. The Scottish missionaries and van der Kemp were particularly inundated with requests: Williams, 'Missionaries', p. 301; van der Kemp, Transactions, pp. 410-11, 418, 422-23, 426-27.

<sup>7</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 18 November 1827.

<sup>8</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 4-10 October 1829. Shrewsbury noted with horror that 'one man would have actually prayed to me would I have allowed the blasphemy, for he said I was their God.'

<sup>9</sup>Ayliff Journal, 15 August 1832.

<sup>10</sup>Missionary Notices, 178 (1830), 29 November 1829 Kay journal extract, p. 343.

<sup>11</sup>Young, Missionary Narrative, p. 55.

had been caused by food he had eaten while among the whites.<sup>12</sup> At one point, Shrewsbury was directly accused of bewitching Hintsa, although this allegation was not pursued.<sup>13</sup> Such information had an adverse effect upon missionary labours, for Kay commented that 'many of these poor deluded souls were deterred from coming near us by a dread of sickness and death!'<sup>14</sup> Whether this was a constant threat to their work is doubtful, since most of the rumours seem to have circulated around 1830 and were not reported earlier.<sup>15</sup>

—The very presence of the missionaries was seen as being capable of causing harm. On a visit to Ndlambe's people to negotiate the establishment of a station, James Whitworth was told by his interpreter that the people were smoking 'to enchant us, that we might not injure them'.<sup>16</sup> The perceived power of the missionaries may have discouraged some Africans from attending services, as Shrewsbury noted:

The people have a superstitious notion that Death or some Calamity will attend them if they come to hear the word, and this groundless fear operates in preventing their attendance in the Sabbath Day.<sup>17</sup>

When Kay's personal papers were stolen and later recovered at Mount Coke, the people were relieved:

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<sup>12</sup>Ayliff Journal, 29 October 1830; Rose, Four Years, p. 192. Chief Vusani (Ngubencuka) of the Thembu refused to eat with the missionaries for the same reason: W.M.S., 3 June 1830 Kay journal extract, 21 June 1830.

<sup>13</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 10 January 1830.

<sup>14</sup>W.M.S., 13 April 1830 Kay journal extract, 24 April 1830.

<sup>15</sup>As a result of this situation, the missionaries were presented with a quandary in providing medical aid: if the medicine was not successful and the patient died, the people dispensing the medicine could be blamed, as in Mdushane's case: W.M.S., Young to Secretaries, 26 June 1829.

<sup>16</sup>W.M.S., 10 April 1825 Whitworth journal extract, April 1825. Shaw reported a similar incident in which 'dacha' was smoked to protect the chief from the missionaries' bewitching power: My Mission, p. 251.

<sup>17</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 12 August 1827.

their superstitious fears had risen to such a pitch, as to induce many of them to conclude that had they been burnt in their country, the death of its inhabitants would have been inevitable.<sup>18</sup>

There were some positive benefits to this perceived power, as the evangelists were also credited with the ability to neutralize witchcraft:

It is most remarkable, however, that a belief has become current amongst the Kaffirs that no witchcraft can be practiced where a mission village is established.<sup>19</sup>

Among the Tswana, bountiful mission harvests were ascribed to the innate power of the missionaries and not to their agricultural techniques;<sup>20</sup> however, no such claims were explicitly made on the Wesleyan stations.

Although the missionaries were feared for this power, it was not necessarily perceived as malicious in character. Within Xhosa culture, power itself was dangerous and could be harmful if not handled correctly. For instance, if someone died, lightning struck an area, or a woman miscarried, those close by were considered 'polluted' by the power exuded and had to undergo rituals to cleanse themselves.<sup>21</sup> Every human was seen as possessing various degrees of such force which could act beneficially upon others if controlled.<sup>22</sup>

The missionaries were credited with an unusually large amount of this force due to their association with the technologically superior whites. In the latter half of the eighteenth century, the frontier Xhosa vied with the pastoral Boers on the Zuurveld for

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<sup>18</sup>W.M.S., 6 August 1826 Kay journal extract, 25 August 1826. This fear may have been induced or enhanced by the mystique surrounding the written word at this time.

<sup>19</sup>Shrewsbury, Memorials, p. 245.

<sup>20</sup>J. & J. Comaroff, 'The Colonization of Consciousness', p. 279.

<sup>21</sup>Lichtenstein, Travels, pp. 257-59; Alberti, Tribal Life, p. 48; Hunter, Reaction to Conquest, pp. 46-47.

<sup>22</sup>In this context, it is unclear whether the death of frontier chiefs was seen as a deliberate working of missionary power.

land and cattle. They competed on a more or less equal footing until the Xhosa were expelled over the Fish River in 1811-12. For the first time, the full extent of the colony's technical and material resources was revealed.<sup>23</sup> It was a profound shock which led them to look for explanations and the source of this power.<sup>24</sup> It was inevitable that the white man's religion should be seen as one of the reasons for his success. One chief stated,

'I now perceive why the English are men: God has made them great, because they serve him. We are but children, and not men, because we neither know nor serve God.'<sup>25</sup>

The technical knowledge of the Europeans was the basis for this conclusion.<sup>26</sup> One homestead head encouraged his people to take note that 'these men you know to be much superior to you; they know more; and they come with God's word in their hands'.<sup>27</sup> The missionaries were therefore a formidable combination to the Xhosa: they represented white power as well as mystical abilities.

The integrity of the missionaries was also an important factor weighed by Africans. Before the Wesleyans began their work at Wesleyville in 1823, J.T. van der Kemp and Joseph Williams had briefly laboured among the Xhosa in 1799-1800 and 1816-1818 respectively. Although their sojourns were brief, they made a significant, positive impression upon the people which helped prepare the way for subsequent

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<sup>23</sup>Peires, House of Phalo, p. 66.

<sup>24</sup>This search for a new power resulted in the rise of the prophets Nxele and Ntsikana: Peires, House of Phalo, pp. 66-67; Hodgson, God of the Xhosa, p. 26; Wilson and Thompson, Oxford History, vol. 1, p. 253. Similar prophetic movements of resistance to the whites also developed among American Indians: Hobsbawm, Age of Revolution, p. 275.

<sup>25</sup>Kay, Travels, p. 57.

<sup>26</sup>Tempels, Bantu Philosophy, p. 66; Shorter, African Culture, p. 80.

<sup>27</sup>Kay, Travels, p. 38.

missionaries.<sup>28</sup>

Van der Kemp stands out among all the Xhosaland missionaries for his singularity.<sup>29</sup> A former cavalry officer, doctor, and philosopher who knew 16 modern and ancient languages,<sup>30</sup> he arrived in southern Africa at the age of 52. Unlike the missionaries who followed, he went to Ngqika without having first received permission to reside among his people. He arrived just as the Third Frontier War was breaking out and was as a result the object of much fear and suspicion. In the sixteen months that van der Kemp lived among the Ngqika, he was constantly accused of betraying them<sup>31</sup> and was finally forced to leave due to the unrest on the frontier.

Despite these incredible handicaps, van der Kemp made a deep impression on the Xhosa. He was popularly regarded as having 'secretly stolen away from his own people who were the enemies of the Kaffirs to bring to them the light from above'.<sup>32</sup> In the years that followed, he was visited at Bethelsdorp by many Xhosa - including Ndlambe - and was fondly remembered by his listeners years afterward.<sup>33</sup> After he left, Ngqika expressed his desire for a successor to van der Kemp.<sup>34</sup>

The carpenter Joseph Williams was quite the opposite of the learned van der Kemp. Nonetheless, he succeeded in gathering many people together for Sunday and

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<sup>28</sup>Wauchope, Missionaries, p. 7.

<sup>29</sup>Lichtenstein gives a graphic eyewitness portrayal of van der Kemp's appearance and demeanour: Travels, pp. 235-239.

<sup>30</sup>Hewson, Missionary Institutions, Series 2, p. 63.

<sup>31</sup>Van der Kemp's journal entries for this period are recorded in the Transactions of the Missionary Society, pp. 372-421. The Boers were responsible for initiating many of the accusations against van der Kemp: *ibid.*, pp. 383, 397, 413.

<sup>32</sup>Wauchope, Missionaries, p. 19.

<sup>33</sup>Calderwood, Caffres and Caffre Missions, p. 92.

<sup>34</sup>R.H.W. Shepherd, Where Aloes Flame (London, 1948), p. 88.

school attendance.<sup>35</sup> Like van der Kemp, he resisted colonial attempts to use him as a government agent, stating that if he did so, 'the natives would say that I was come to entrap them, instead of instructing them in the truths of Christianity'.<sup>36</sup> Despite the unsettled situation that promoted Xhosa mistrust of him,<sup>37</sup> his 'prudence, industry, and kindness' were remembered by Ngqika and his followers<sup>38</sup> and his influence extended to the prophet Ntsikana, who told the Xhosa to 'cling to the missionaries and their teaching'.<sup>39</sup>

Van der Kemp and Williams therefore significantly influenced the initial perceptions of the missionaries. Both men took pains to avoid association with colonial authorities and were respected for their integrity. Their influence extended to Ngqika, Ndlambe, and Ntsikana, all of whom played important roles in the future reception of the missionaries.

When the Wesleyans began their work at Mount Coke in 1825, their evangelism also took place against the backdrop of continual conflict between Xhosa and colony on the frontier. The association that the Africans made between the missionaries and the colonial government was inescapable but also a matter of degree. They were - like all missionaries - used as convenient go-betweens by the chiefs and the colonial government<sup>40</sup> and were seen to be 'well-disposed and trustworthy'.<sup>41</sup> Ndlambe so trusted

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid., pp. 89-90.

<sup>36</sup>Groves, Christianity in Africa, vol. 1, p. 242.

<sup>37</sup>Hewson, ed., Missionary Institutions, Series 2, p. 72.

<sup>38</sup>Shepherd, Where Aloes Flame, p. 92. Shaw believed that Williams' sojourn among the Ngqika helped dissipate suspicion of the missionaries who followed: My Mission, p. 65.

<sup>39</sup>Shepherd, Where Aloes Flame, pp. 93-94; Wauchope, Missionaries, pp. 25-26.

<sup>40</sup>Wilson & Thompson, eds., Oxford History, vol. 1, p. 266.

<sup>41</sup>Hutchinson, 'Missionary Activity', p. 161.

William Shaw that he refused to meet with the colonial authorities unless the missionary was present,<sup>42</sup> and Phato stated, 'I will protect all men who are like William Shaw'.<sup>43</sup> The extent to which their mediation role increased Xhosa hostility toward agents of the Gospel depended in part upon how actively the missionaries involved themselves in local politics.

Until 1830, the missionaries at Mount Coke and Butterworth did not show any inclination to interfere with the chiefs' administration. The instructions to all Wesleyan missionaries warned them against doing so:

We cannot omit, without neglecting our duty, to warn you against meddling with political parties, or secular disputes. You are teachers of religion; and that alone should be kept in view. It is, however, a part of your duty, as Ministers, to enforce, by precept and example, a cheerful obedience to lawful authority.<sup>44</sup>

Shrewsbury demonstrated this principle when asked to mediate in a dispute involving station residents, stating that he was not a civil judge but a preacher.<sup>45</sup> Kay similarly shied away from political involvement,<sup>46</sup> and it is doubtful if Young - being somewhat gullible - was capable of such manoeuvring. Over time, missionary criticism of customs and the removal of converts from the chiefs' jurisdiction were seen as threatening the Xhosa social, political and religious system; however, this danger was not immediately apparent and did not provoke the opposition of the chiefs during the first years of evangelization.

Hence the missionaries engendered some trust among the Xhosa who were, said

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<sup>42</sup>Wesleyan Reports (1828), 14 February 1828 Shaw journal extract, p. 65.

<sup>43</sup>W.M.S., 15 March 1825 Whitworth journal extract, n.d.

<sup>44</sup>Instructions, V and VI. These instructions were quoted at the beginning of every issue of the Wesleyan Reports from 1821 onward.

<sup>45</sup>W.M.S., 23 August 1830 Shrewsbury journal extract, 31 December 1830.

<sup>46</sup>W.M.S., 7 April 1830 Kay journal extract, 24 April 1830.

Shrewsbury, 'wary and cautious, but when a missionary gains their confidence, that confidence is unbounded'.<sup>47</sup> This 'wait and see' attitude was reflected in the comment made by a councillor to Shrewsbury a year after the station was established at Butterworth:

'These words,' said he, 'are similar to those you spoke when we first saw you. We then thought those were your first words, and knew not what would come after, when you should be settled in the land, but now we see you are constantly teaching the same truths.'<sup>48</sup>

Given the heightened tension between Xhosa and colony at this time, it was surprising that the Xhosa trusted the missionaries at all:

But that the harassed Kaffer should still evince such confidence in British missionaries, is certainly more than surprising, seeing that British soldiers have ever and anon been going to, or passing by their stations, in battle array...<sup>49</sup>

This increasing confidence was reflected in the relative safety of the missionaries, the first of whom was killed - apparently by accident - in 1845.<sup>50</sup>

In the initial period, Xhosa attitudes toward the missionaries differed from their evaluation of other whites. When Kay and Richard Haddy visited the Thembu in 1830, Kay noted that 'the inhabitants received us rather coolly; but on learning who we were, their conduct assumed an entirely different character'.<sup>51</sup> Although the missionaries carried on a significant trade at their stations,<sup>52</sup> they were never categorized with other

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<sup>47</sup>Shrewsbury, Memorials, p. 247. Kay and Young also commented on the confidence in them that the people displayed: W.M.S., Young to Secretaries, 26 June 1829; Kay, Travels, 9 August 1825 journal extract, p. 42.

<sup>48</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 6 March 1828.

<sup>49</sup>Kay, Succinct Statement, p. 87.

<sup>50</sup>Williams, 'Missionaries', p. 83.

<sup>51</sup>Kay, Travels, 2 June 1830 journal extract, p. 286.

<sup>52</sup>See Roger B. Beck, 'Bibles and Beads: Missionaries as Traders in Southern Africa in the early nineteenth Century', Journal of African History 30 (1989).

traders<sup>53</sup> of which the evangelists were well aware. Kay stated that such a designation was likely to have a 'baneful' influence on the minds of the people.<sup>54</sup> During the lowest point of missionary-Xhosa relations in the Sixth Frontier War of 1834-35, not a single missionary was killed although nine traders were.<sup>55</sup> One trader was interrupted while sharing a meal with F.G. Kayser of the London Missionary Society: he was murdered while Kayser was spared.<sup>56</sup> The missionaries experienced similar protection years later in Natal.<sup>57</sup>

This may have been due partly to the protection extended to them by the chiefs: any attempts to harm the missionaries were seen as an attack on the chief himself. When some cattle were stolen from Mount Coke, Kay reported that Ndlambe was enraged and stated, 'Who could the man be, who dared thus to tread...upon Gagabie's [Rharhabe's] Kraal!'.<sup>58</sup> In addition, the missionary's position as head of the station was similar to that of the chief's, and Xhosa chieftains were not harmed by their enemies.<sup>59</sup> Like homestead heads and chiefs, the missionaries organized economic production and protected their people. This position of privilege was perceived by Shrewsbury:

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<sup>53</sup>Williams, 'Missionaries', p. 244. In Iboland (Nigeria), the missionaries were associated with traders which was very much to their detriment: Ilogu, Ibo Culture, p. 77.

<sup>54</sup>Kay, Travels, 9 August 1825 journal extract, p. 40. According to W.B. Boyce, some traders 'either from ignorance of native customs or from natural ill temper behave in a very overbearing manner': Boyce to Sir Benjamin D'Urban, 31 March 1834 (MIC 408/1, Cory Library).

<sup>55</sup>Williams, 'Missionaries', p. 243. Theal states that ten traders died: History, vol. 4, p. 8.

<sup>56</sup>W.M.S., Young to Secretaries, 23 January 1835.

<sup>57</sup>Du Plessis, History of Christian Missions, p. 228.

<sup>58</sup>W.M.S., Kay to Secretaries, 20 April 1826; cf. Young, Missionary Narrative, p. 11.

<sup>59</sup>This was why the death and mutilation of Hintsa at the hands of Colonial troops in 1835 was so appalling to the Xhosa.

every missionary being the head of his mission, he is considered throughout as a kind of magistrate, as is every master of a kraal with regard to the people of his kraal.<sup>60</sup>

Hence both trust and fear figured in their safety.

The trust created by showing concern for the welfare of the populace also had its disadvantages. Shrewsbury was disturbed by the 'intolerable rudeness of behaviour' of some people:

knowing that missionaries are mild and forbearing in their principles and conduct, they are too much inclined to take great advantage of this circumstance...<sup>61</sup>

This applied equally to converts. One station resident who had had his cattle stolen was told that he could demand a large fine as punishment. He declined this, demanding only the return of his stolen cattle which were consequently not returned, the thief evidently counting on the tolerance of his victim.<sup>62</sup>

Both the missionaries and the station residents, then, enjoyed a good reputation in the initial years of the missions. Whenever disputes arose involving the station residents, they would refer the matter to the chiefs or councillors to decide. In one such case the station residents were acquitted of theft, and the chiefs said afterwards,

'More than two years has this Mission been established, and no one upon it hath done wrong to any man, while we are stealing from one another all over the country, that is the only place where such depredations are not committed.'<sup>63</sup>

Due to their fledgling nature, the stations had not yet become major centres of refugees and undesirables that later scandalized the surrounding communities.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>60</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 22 September 1829.

<sup>61</sup>W.M.S., 10 June 1830 Shrewsbury journal extract, 31 December 1830.

<sup>62</sup>W.M.S., 21 November 1826 Kay journal extract, January 1827.

<sup>63</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 27 September 1829. A similar thought was also expressed by an old chief a year earlier: *ibid.*, 17 September 1828.

<sup>64</sup>Whiteside, Methodist Church, p. 192; Etherington, Preachers, p. 67.

Protection of the missionaries was not only based upon respect. Similar to the chiefs, the commoners were aware of the benefits that their missionaries represented. A fundamental reason that stations were established was to give Africans a voice to represent them in the colony. When one man suggested the missionaries be killed during a period of unrest, he was restrained:

No, the Missionaries are our only friends; they are our only mouths to speak for us when we get into trouble; and if we should kill them, it would be like cutting out our tongues, and murdering our only faithful friends.<sup>65</sup>

When one man was warned by Shrewsbury of the impending Day of Judgment, he replied that he would flee to the missionary for help on that day. To this Shrewsbury remarked,

This strange thought seems to have arisen out of the circumstance of their having been accustomed to resort to us frequently with success, as a kind of mediator, when involved in difficulty with the colony.<sup>66</sup>

Contrary to being associated only with the colony, then, the missionaries were at times seen as allies of the Xhosa.

Another advantage the missionaries afforded was of a material nature. The missionaries were influential in arranging for a trade fair to be held at Fort Willshire starting in 1824,<sup>67</sup> enabling the Xhosa to buy and sell articles at more reasonable prices. This caused William Shaw to comment,

The consciousness that the missionaries have materially helped them in these things has given the Caffres the very highest opinion of a missionary...<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup>Young, *Missionary Narrative*, pp. 72-73. Young was probably exaggerating that missionaries were seen as 'their only faithful friends'; however, it is likely that the Xhosa realized the political benefits of a resident missionary.

<sup>66</sup>W.M.S., 5 July 1831 Shrewsbury journal extract, 31 December 1831.

<sup>67</sup>W.M.S., Shaw to Secretaries, 16 June 1825. The trade fair was held annually until 1830, when licensed traders were permitted in Xhosaland.

<sup>68</sup>W.M.S., Shaw to Secretaries, 16 June 1825.

The missionaries were consequently treated very carefully as they were seen as sources of power and material benefits. Their integrity was during the first few years unquestioned, nonetheless the swelling number of missionaries in 1830 and their increasing involvement in colonial affairs<sup>69</sup> caused them to become ever more associated with the interests and aims of the colonial government, consolidating the association between Christianity and white aggression by 1834.<sup>70</sup> It is the antagonism bred by missionary affiliation with the colony which is given by Donovan Williams as one of the main reasons for Xhosa rejection of the Gospel.<sup>71</sup> Yet this association was not a major detriment in the initial period, during which time the Xhosa also resisted Christian teachings. Thus the reason for Xhosa lack of response to Christianity is not due primarily to the association of the message with white oppression but rather due to the rejection of the message itself.

#### Perceptions of the Missionary Purpose

Given that the missionaries were perceived as being at once powerful and sincere, what did the Xhosa believe their purpose was? Judging by the number of theories circulating as to missionary motives, the topic was actively debated. An examination of their speculation reveals that, as Shrewsbury stated, they were 'utterly unable to comprehend the motives by which we are actuated'.<sup>72</sup>

One idea under consideration was that the missionaries were trying to transform the Xhosa into Englishmen. In answering Kay's question as to why so few people

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<sup>69</sup>John Ayliff's arrival at Butterworth in 1830 marked a turning point in this respect.

<sup>70</sup>Williams, 'Missionaries', p. 166.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., p. 148.

<sup>72</sup>Shrewsbury, Memorials, p. 247.

attended services, Chief Mdushane replied:

'...it is a shame, but our teachers must bear in mind that we are only Caffres yet: when the Word gets into our hearts, we shall act as the English do.'<sup>73</sup>

One reason this may have been supposed is that many Xhosa believed the missionaries were trying to recruit them as soldiers:

Some time since it was rumoured at the kraals near Wesleyville, that the ultimate design of the missionaries was to seize the Kaffirs and make soldiers of them, in the same manner as the Hottentots had been served by the Dutch boors.<sup>74</sup>

William Shepstone creatively countered this charge by asking why the missionaries would then expend so much effort on people who could not possibly become soldiers, such as cripples.<sup>75</sup>

In addition to this perceived purpose, the Xhosa theorized that the missionaries may have come to seize land and power:

By one class it is surmised that we are desirous of getting into our possession the best parts of their country and...that our object is to reduce the power of the Chiefs and get their subjects wholly under our command.<sup>76</sup>

Another ulterior motive ascribed to the missionaries was that of spying. When Hintsá was in a state of war with the Thembu, he moved far from the missionaries to avoid their censure, telling his companions, 'take care that ye tell not this in the ears of the Missionary!'<sup>77</sup> It was surmised that the missionaries apprised the colonial authorities of

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<sup>73</sup>W.M.S., 26 March 1826 Kay journal extract, 1 April 1826.

<sup>74</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 5 December 1826; cf. W.M.S., Kay to Secretaries, 14 March 1830. This rumour was apparently encouraged by some Boers: W.M.S., 10 July 1830 Kay journal extract, August 1830.

<sup>75</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 5 December 1826.

<sup>76</sup>W.M.S., Kay to Secretaries, 14 March 1830.

<sup>77</sup>W.M.S., Kay to Secretaries, 14 March 1830; cf. Ayliff Journal, 18 November 1834.

all happenings and told them where stolen cattle were hidden.<sup>78</sup>

One last aspect to be examined in determining the Xhosa view of the missionary purpose is the role played by the prophet Nxele (Makhanda). A protégé of James Read and Joseph Williams of the London Missionary Society, Nxele preached a unique version of the Gospel throughout Caffraria. Known to the British as 'Lynx',<sup>79</sup> he prophesied the coming of the missionaries before his death. Kay stated that 'the Natives are almost generally of opinion, that our coming constitutes the fulfilment of his prophecy'.<sup>80</sup> The evangelists found that when they preached anything similar to Nxele's teachings, the people responded by saying, 'Yes, that is true, for Lynx likewise said so'.<sup>81</sup> This perception certainly aided the missionaries in the initial establishment of their stations. However, in some places the missionaries found that Nxele's influence was an obstacle to their efforts. Close to Wesleyville, Shaw found an old chief

who is a very devoted disciple of the pernicious principles and superstitions first promulgated and established by a Caffre named Makanna...in the manner of conducting worship, there is a sad mixture of good and evil...We now deemed it proper to discontinue for a season our visits, telling the chief and the people, that we could not continue preaching to a people who persisted in praying to a man, instead of to God only...<sup>82</sup>

Close to Mount Coke, Shrewsbury similarly found people hypothesizing that Nxele was the same as Jesus Christ.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>78</sup>W.M.S., Young to Secretaries, 10 August 1830.

<sup>79</sup>'Lynx' was the English version of the Boer 'Links' (meaning 'left' in Dutch); 'Nxele' meant 'left-handed' in Xhosa.

<sup>80</sup>W.M.S., Kay to Secretaries, 20 June 1826. References to Nxele are made only in the early period of evangelization, suggesting that the Xhosa stopped making this association as their opinions of Christianity and its messengers changed.

<sup>81</sup>W.M.S., Kay to Secretaries, 20 June 1826.

<sup>82</sup>Wesleyan Reports (1828), pp. 61-62. Shaw found the same beliefs in another district nearby, where schools were subsequently suspended.

<sup>83</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 9-14 May 1831.

It would seem from the above that a contradiction existed between Xhosa evaluations of the character and purpose of the missionaries. It has been shown that the missionaries were trusted as individuals and as the fulfilment of prophecy yet were imputed with worldly motives. It is not so much an inconsistency as much as an indication of the wide gap between European and African understandings. From the Xhosa perspective, white men had entered their territory not seeking land or cattle and had left many comforts and conveniences behind.<sup>84</sup> Kay remarked on the impression this made:

To the great mass of the people, our labours and intentions form a mystery which perplexes them exceedingly. Their own pursuits being altogether of an earthly and sensual nature, they cannot conceive of anything beyond that round of employment, in which they spend their lives.<sup>85</sup>

The Xhosa did not understand their motives nor the abstract and unfamiliar concepts which the preachers introduced. The missionaries appeared to be sincere on the surface but left a lingering suspicion among the Xhosa that they had some secret, deep designs which were not yet discovered.<sup>86</sup> The missionaries were clearly a puzzle to the Africans, their proceedings 'a labyrinth, which they gaze upon with a mixture of awe and suspicion'.<sup>87</sup>

### Perceptions of the Missionary Lifestyle

The prominent characteristic of African traditional societies was their emphasis on community. A person's position in society was determined by his/her clan, kinship

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<sup>84</sup>W.M.S., 23 June 1827 Shrewsbury journal extract, 31 December 1827.

<sup>85</sup>W.M.S., Kay to Secretaries, 14 March 1830.

<sup>86</sup>W.M.S., 23 June 1827 Shrewsbury journal extract, 31 December 1827.

<sup>87</sup>W.M.S., Kay to Secretaries, 14 March 1830.

group, and gender, and brought with it responsibilities and privileges. To belong was not always dependent upon birth in that society, as illustrated by the various groups who were accepted into and participated in Xhosa society.<sup>88</sup> These 'aliens' became clients or associates of the Xhosa and were over time absorbed into their community. The missionaries showed no intention of becoming a part of the African community in which they lived. This proved - unknown to them - to be a major reason why Christianity was unattractive to the Xhosa.

The lack of importance placed on their interaction with Africans is reflected in the writings of the missionaries. A feature of their correspondence is the astonishing paucity of information given on the social interaction between evangelist and evangelized. The details that are given afford tantalizing glimpses into the self-imposed isolation of the missionaries. They reveal that the Wesleyans could not identify with any facet of African society and therefore had no desire to be immersed in it.

Although the overall estimation that the missionaries had of 'Caffre character' was a negative one, they believed the Xhosa had some redeeming characteristics. Shrewsbury declared the people to be 'the most independent and noble race to be found on this continent'.<sup>89</sup> One of the few positive comments that Young made referred to the 'strong natural mental powers' of his listeners<sup>90</sup> while Shaw noted their 'acuteness'.<sup>91</sup> Kay was the most expansive: upon hearing of the murder of a fellow Wesleyan in

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<sup>88</sup>These included San, Khoikhoi, and Nguni peoples, army deserters from the Colony, and shipwreck survivors: Wilson & Thompson, Oxford History, vol. 1, p. 232. In their interaction with the Boers, the Xhosa similarly expected to merge with frontier whites through trade and alliances: Peires, House of Phalo, pp. 53-54.

<sup>89</sup>W.M.S., Shrewsbury to Secretaries, 30 June 1830. This may indicate his high opinion of the Xhosa or his low opinion of the overall character of all other Africans.

<sup>90</sup>Young, Missionary Narrative, p. 83.

<sup>91</sup>Shaw, My Mission, pp. 74-75. Young's and Shaw's comments probably reflect the many times their listeners disputed their doctrinal tenets.

Namaqualand,<sup>92</sup> he argued that they were not bloodthirsty and need not be feared if one associated with them as friends.<sup>93</sup> He reiterated a few years later that the missionaries were friends of the Xhosa, who possessed both admirable and deplorable characteristics.<sup>94</sup>

These comments were greatly outweighed by the more frequent disparaging remarks.<sup>95</sup> There was consensus that the Xhosa were 'addicted to plundering habits'.<sup>96</sup> Their customs were 'shockingly sinful' and their 'licentiousness...exceed[ed] all description'.<sup>97</sup> The evangelists particularly abhorred the feasting and dancing that accompanied celebrations - 'What a creature is fallen man,' lamented Shaw after continued festivities around Wesleyville.<sup>98</sup> Their British sensibilities were particularly offended by the Africans' unashamed display of nudity, which was 'intolerably annoying and disgusting'.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>92</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 9 May 1826.

<sup>93</sup>W.M.S., Kay to Secretaries, 20 June 1826.

<sup>94</sup>W.M.S., 26 April 1830 Kay journal extract, 28 April 1830.

<sup>95</sup>The Wesleyan view was shared by other missionaries such as A. Kropf of the Berlin Missionary Society, who stated, 'zu nichts mehr haben sie Lust and Liebe, also zu sündigen' (i.e. they love nothing more than sinning): see Das Volk der Xosa-Kaffern (Berlin, 1889), pp. 84-88 for his deprecating assessment. The Church Missionary Society in East Africa similarly saw little value in African culture: Beidelman, Colonial Evangelism, p. 128.

<sup>96</sup>W.M.S., Shaw to Secretaries, 27 February 1825; cf. *ibid.*, 13 March 1825 Whitworth journal extract, n.d.; *ibid.*, 24 February 1826 Kay journal extract, 1 April 1826.

<sup>97</sup>W.M.S., Shrewsbury to Secretaries, 31 March 1828; *ibid.*, 19 October 1826 Kay journal extract, January 1827.

<sup>98</sup>W.M.S., 1 February & 26 March 1825 Shaw journal extracts, April 1825.

<sup>99</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 21 January 1831; cf. Shrewsbury Journal, 24 November 1826; Ayliff Journal, 6 October 1830. At the Glasgow Missionary Society station at Burnshill, Ngqika's successor Sandile was not allowed to eat with the missionaries on account of his nudity: Backhouse, Narrative, p. 233.

The Africans were thus viewed as 'ignorant',<sup>100</sup> 'deeply degraded',<sup>101</sup> and consequently not of sufficient morality and civilization to be considered the equals of Englishmen. William Shaw thought it important to learn their language 'without exactly descending to their level'<sup>102</sup> and was disappointed when he perceived that they viewed him as a friend:

The consciousness that the missionaries have materially helped them...has given the Caffres the very highest opinion of a missionary, not only as their teacher but (what alas they regard more) their friend.<sup>103</sup>

Shrewsbury also made it clear that genuine friendship was not sought after when he stated, 'Were it not that I desire to promote the salvation of their souls, I would not dwell amongst such a wretched people another hour.'<sup>104</sup> Intermingling with Africans was hence distasteful to them, as when Shrewsbury had to share a bed with a Xhosa:

Of course, I kept as far distant from his greasy kaross as was consistent with politeness, for a Christian ought to be courteous even to a barbarian.<sup>105</sup>

Accordingly, any relationships between missionary and African came about inadvertently or were cultivated with the object of evangelization in mind.

From the African side, it seems that some rapport was attempted. Many visitors came by the station to visit as well as to satisfy their curiosity. According to Kay,

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<sup>100</sup>W.M.S., 26 June 1825 Kay journal extract, July 1825.

<sup>101</sup>Young, Missionary Narrative, p. 2; Graham's Town Journal, 14 February 1833, Addresses of W. Shepstone and J. Ayliff at Annual Meeting.

<sup>102</sup>Shaw, My Mission, pp. 17-18.

<sup>103</sup>W.M.S., Shaw to Secretaries, 16 June 1825.

<sup>104</sup>W.M.S., Shrewsbury to Secretaries, 31 March 1828. When Shrewsbury travelled to Grahamstown, he left Nicholas Lochenberg (hardly a model citizen - see note 172, p. 82 above) in charge of the station as he was the 'responsible individual' there: W.M.S., 18 January 1829 Shrewsbury journal extract, 31 December 1829.

<sup>105</sup>W.M.S., 15 March 1831 Shrewsbury journal extract, 31 December 1831; cf. Shrewsbury Journal, 27 November 1826.

Nothing seems to stimulate them more, when engaged in any sort of manual labour, than the circumstance of our being employed amongst them, in some way or other.<sup>106</sup>

When missionaries arrived home from a journey they were 'greeted with joy' by 'great numbers'.<sup>107</sup> Upon taking their leave to transfer to another station, the people 'all wept bitterly' and 'were bathed in tears'.<sup>108</sup>

Of the four Wesleyans studied, Stephen Kay showed the greatest propensity for socializing with the Xhosa. He noted that in African traditional society, tremendous importance was attached to the giving and receiving of gifts as an expression of mutual acceptance and appreciation:<sup>109</sup>

This reciprocity of friendly tokens is the customary mode of forming attachments, and establishing connexions, throughout the whole of Kaffraria. In itself, therefore, the Kaffer's present is but a nominal benefit.<sup>110</sup>

It is significant that the most optimistic correspondence from Kay is strewn with references to enjoyable social exchanges. He was particularly astonished when, on an elephant hunt, an African showed great concern for his safety and rescued him from apparent danger.<sup>111</sup> It was during this period that he noted that some Xhosa appeared to 'manifest an attachment to and confidence in us, which naturally produces a

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<sup>106</sup>W.M.S., 28 April 1826 Kay journal extract, 30 July 1826.

<sup>107</sup>W.M.S., 18 February 1826 Kay journal extract, 18 February 1826; *ibid.*, Young to Secretaries, 1 January 1829.

<sup>108</sup>W.M.S., Kay to Secretaries, March 1827; Young, Missionary Narrative, p. 84. These emotional exchanges may have been confined to the station residents, who often developed close bonds with their teachers.

<sup>109</sup>Staples, 'Ancestors', pp. 105-106.

<sup>110</sup>W.M.S., 1 June 1830 Kay journal extract, 21 June 1830. The missionaries adapted well to some of the outward customs of the people, especially the exchange of gifts and diplomacy observed in dealing with chiefs and councillors.

<sup>111</sup>W.M.S., Kay to Secretaries, 20 June 1826. Kay was particularly fond of repeating this incident: *ibid.*, 6 May 1826 Kay journal extract, 30 July 1826; Missionary Notices 135 (1827), p. 232; Steedman, Wanderings, pp. 22-23.

reciprocal feeling on our part'.<sup>112</sup> Kay reluctantly left Mount Coke in 1827, admitting that he 'could not refrain from tears' when the station residents bade him a sad farewell.<sup>113</sup> This is the closest reference in the correspondence of this period to anything resembling friendship.

Because the missionaries were unwilling to befriend the Xhosa, they displayed remarkable insensitivity in their dealings with them. When people came to visit, they were served up with a sermon.<sup>114</sup> Offers of food and lodging on itinerating tours were declined in favour of moving on and preaching at more kraals.<sup>115</sup> Marriage feasts, circumcision and initiation ceremonies, dances, and discussions among chiefs and councillors were interrupted to expound the truths of the Gospel.<sup>116</sup> When Ndlambe's brother Mnyalusa refused to listen to Shrewsbury, the missionary followed him into his hut and did not leave until after his sermon was done.<sup>117</sup> Shrewsbury demonstrated the height of insensitivity when, upon the death of Chief Mdushane, he distributed his clothes to station residents, stating that once the clothes were worn out he would allow them to be buried in Mdushane's grave.<sup>118</sup> In short, seemingly every opportunity to establish rapport within the community was declined. It was an oversight that was to cost the missionaries dearly.

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<sup>112</sup>W.M.S., Kay to Secretaries, 20 April 1826.

<sup>113</sup>Missionary Notices 143 (1827), 13 March 1827 Kay journal extract, pp. 357-358.

<sup>114</sup>W.M.S., 16 March 1826 Kay journal extract, 1 April 1826.

<sup>115</sup>W.M.S., Young to Secretaries, 10 January 1828.

<sup>116</sup>W.M.S., 16-17 December 1829 Young journal extract, 5 January 1830; Shrewsbury Journal, 13-17 August 1832; Missionary Notices 219 (1834), 30 August 1832 Ayliff journal extract, p. 437; Ayliff Journal, 30 May 1832. Preaching against polygamy was a favourite topic at the marriage celebrations.

<sup>117</sup>W.M.S., 9-14 May 1831 Shrewsbury journal extract, 31 December 1831.

<sup>118</sup>W.M.S., 4 March 1830 Shrewsbury journal extract, 31 December 1830.

The social life of the Xhosa centred around their festivities, be they weddings, initiation ceremonies, or the more common beer drinks.<sup>119</sup> Dancing and story-telling were the preferred activities at these gatherings, with ox-racing being the favourite sport at weddings.<sup>120</sup> Nxele realized the importance of such enjoyable events in encouraging his followers 'to dance and to enjoy life and to make love, so that the black people would multiply and fill the earth'.<sup>121</sup>

The sombre lifestyle of the missionaries was in sharp contrast to this vitality. The Wesleyans came from a stern evangelical background which in Britain discouraged attendance at balls, races and the theatre: in Shrewsbury's words, 'all Worldly Pleasures are opposed to Christianity'.<sup>122</sup> The preachers were appalled at the frequent merry-making and expressed repeatedly that it was 'very wrong to dance and sing the devil's songs'.<sup>123</sup> When Ayliff sought to wean them of these enjoyments at a celebration,

the whole party came round me tho' with manifest reluctance. They told me they loved dancing, and that if I had anything to say to them I must say it quickly as they wanted to go again. I told them I could not speak

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<sup>119</sup>Hunter, Reaction to Conquest, p. 356. Among the Mpondo, the missionaries forbade their converts to attend beer drinks (*ibid.*, p. 373); however there is no record of Wesleyans discouraging this during the period 1825-35.

<sup>120</sup>Soga, Ama-Xosa, pp. 235, 361; Kropf, Xosa-Kaffern, pp. 110-112; Hunter, Reaction to Conquest, pp. 366-367; Margaret Shaw, 'Material Culture', in The Bantu-Speaking Peoples of Southern Africa, ed. by W.D. Hammond-Tooke (London, 1974), p. 111. When a chief requested that Kay lend him a horse for an ox race, the missionary refused: W.M.S., 4 September 1826 Kay journal extract, 29 December 1826.

<sup>121</sup>Wauchope, Missionaries, p. 34.

<sup>122</sup>W.J. Shrewsbury, A Discourse against Worldly Pleasures (Grahamstown, 1833), p. 17. That this was not representative of all the British settlers is shown by a published response to Shrewsbury's work 'By a Layman', A Letter to the Rev. W.J. Shrewsbury in reply to his 'Discourse against Worldly Pleasures' (Grahamstown, 1834).

<sup>123</sup>W.M.S., 29 January 1825 Shaw journal extract, April 1825. Although condemning it, Shrewsbury was evidently fascinated with Xhosa dancing: 'When wearied with leaping, they moved out of the line, with various antic motions that required less violent exertion. It was a complete spectacle of the joy of savage Nations': Shrewsbury Journal, 12 December 1826.

God's Word in a hurry, when one of the party exclaimed, O don't let us listen to him, let us go. I strove to make them hear, but the more earnest I was the more they shouted, danced and laughed, so that after attempting about an hour to preach the word, I was compelled to desist...<sup>124</sup>

Moodie noted the effect that a ban on such festivities had on the stations:

I soon found, however, that at all the missionary stations those innocent amusements of which the Kaffres are so fond are strictly prohibited as sinful in their nature. The natural effect of this austerity is to sink the mind in gloom and despondency, and to render the Christian religion unamiable at first sight.<sup>125</sup>

This celebration differed from the stillness and solemnity of Sunday services. An assemblage of chiefs noted the distinction while visiting a church service for colonists in Grahamstown:

...they were much impressed with the appearance of the congregation, the order of the service, and the solemnity of the place, having never witnessed anything of the kind before...All behaved remarkably well, but as still as possible, nor was there so much as a smile visible on their countenances during the whole time.<sup>126</sup>

Hintsa noted the discrepancy in African behaviour and reproved his people for not responding louder:

'You have been accustomed to shout, and make noise enough at the dances, why cannot you all join in prayer and in singing the praises of God?'<sup>127</sup>

This lay at the heart of many objections to the Gospel, for though they had been promised 'great news' and expectantly listened to it, they were disappointed. Hintsa's councillors informed Kay that

they saw nothing that was either profitable or desirable in any of our services, or in the word which we preached, seeing that the latter instead of being glad tidings of great joy, as was stated, it was calculated to lessen

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<sup>124</sup>Ayliff Journal, 3 June 1832.

<sup>125</sup>Moodie, Ten Years, pp. 280-281.

<sup>126</sup>W.M.S., 22 January 1826 Kay journal extract, 18 February 1826.

<sup>127</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 16-22 March 1828.

their pleasure...<sup>128</sup>

The Xhosa were expected to relinquish the activities which sustained them, a choice most decided not to make.

Although there are no African comments on the missionary lifestyle in the Wesleyan correspondence of this period, it is possible to conjecture that Africans must have viewed the missionaries as very odd. When Shrewsbury went to preach in a hut filled with smoke, for example, he dealt with it in a novel way:

I was obliged to lie in a recumbent posture, as the smoke was so intolerable, and in that way, and chiefly with my eyes closed to avoid the tormenting smoke, I conversed on the truths of the Gospel to about 10 individuals...now and then I opened my eyes for a moment to see as well as I was able if the people were attentive.<sup>129</sup>

Due to Xhosa politeness, they would never make fun of such behaviour in front of the Europeans but would retell the story and laugh with friends later.<sup>130</sup>

The missionaries may also have been criticized for their child-rearing practices. Children in Xhosa society were spaced well apart so as to ensure the health of mother and child:<sup>131</sup> if Wilson's observations among the Nyakusa hold true for Xhosa society, the missionaries would have been thought irresponsible in this respect.<sup>132</sup>

The Wesleyans did not realize that their lifestyle carried a message equal in weight to the words they spoke.<sup>133</sup> They set themselves up as models of Christianity, but

<sup>128</sup>W.M.S., 13 April 1830 Kay journal extract, 24 April 1830.

<sup>129</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 13-17 August 1832. Ayliff also lay down while preaching in huts: Ayliff Journal, 16 May 1832.

<sup>130</sup>Soga, Ama-Xosa, p. 89.

<sup>131</sup>Alberti, Life and Customs, p. 68.

<sup>132</sup>Wilson, Transformation, p. 79. Shrewsbury's seven closely-spaced children would have been subject to such disapproval.

<sup>133</sup>As one woman explained to Shaw, 'You are our teachers and if we do not see how you do in your house how can we learn': W.M.S., 20 March 1825 Whitworth journal extract, n.d.

the prototype they presented was, in the African view, exceedingly unattractive. Dunbar Moodie was particularly struck by the contrast between Christian and pagan lifestyles in Xhosaland:

At all the missionary stations in Kaffreland, I could not help remarking the gloomy and desponding expression which pervaded the countenances of the people; there was no singing - no dancing - and none of that buoyancy of spirits and animation which characterize the Kaffre race in general. We cannot for a moment suppose that this can be the effect of true religion, which by purifying the heart, elevating the sentiments, and providing the highest motives of action, should rather fill the soul with cheerfulness, and promote innocent hilarity.<sup>134</sup>

The missionaries offered a lifestyle based on individualism which, despite its doctrine of universal brotherhood, did not seem to place value on social relationships. This impression was reinforced when converts were expected to relinquish some of their social obligations upon moving to the station.

In their condemnation of celebrations, the missionaries strengthened the other-worldly orientation of their message. The Cape Nguni worshipped life, vitality, and fertility.<sup>135</sup> If the sombre missionary lifestyle without its festivities was the ideal the Xhosa were to aspire to, it was not appealing.

### **The Chiefs' Perception of the Missionaries and their Message**

The missionaries realized that the chiefs were crucial to the establishment and maintenance of their institutions. Politically, the chiefs granted or denied the residence of Wesleyans in their territory, allocated land for the stations, and were consulted when

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<sup>134</sup>Moodie, *Ten Years*, vol. 2, p. 280. Moodie's overall outlook on African life was positive and provides an interesting contrast to his companion's (and evidently the missionaries') view: Moodie saw circumcision celebrations as 'innocent enjoyment' and 'general hilarity' as opposed to his companion's portrayal of it as 'extravagant and careless mirth': *ibid.*, p. 278.

<sup>135</sup>Wilson, *Transformation*, p. 37.

the missionaries encountered problems.<sup>136</sup> In addition to political power, the chiefs also influenced public opinion in Xhosa society and could manipulate events so as to encourage or discourage missionary labours.<sup>137</sup> As John Davis observed:

The conversion of the Caffre Chiefs is greatly to be desired, for until they are brought to enjoy religion, they will oppose the spread of Divine Truth in ways which will greatly retard the bringing of their people to a knowledge of Christ crucified.<sup>138</sup>

The evangelists recorded their attempts to effect their conversion, and it is interesting to note that the rebukes heaped upon the chiefs for 'heathenish practices' did not figure very prominently in their introductory sermons.

The initial impressions that the chiefs had of the external aspects of Christianity were generally positive. Mdushane was fascinated by the church he visited in Grahamstown, asking, 'and is it possible to build such a house for God in Caffreland?'<sup>139</sup> A similar journey to a chapel in Grahamstown convinced two Xhosa chiefs 'that God's Word was great because so many of the White People came to hear it'.<sup>140</sup> After hearing the singing of the missionaries, Ndlambe was reported as being 'much impressed with the singing'<sup>141</sup> while Khama of Wesleyville stated, 'now I am sure that the great word is true and will strive to learn'.<sup>142</sup> These comments, though of a superficial nature, reflected the chiefs' curiosity about the faith of the white men.

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<sup>136</sup>e.g. theft of missionary property

<sup>137</sup>For example, if a chief moved close to the mission station, his people would follow and give the missionaries a ready audience; he could also arrange for events such as marriages and circumcision ceremonies to conflict with Sunday services, day-school, etc.

<sup>138</sup>W.M.S., 2 July 1828 J. Davis journal extract, 16 July 1828.

<sup>139</sup>W.M.S., 20 January 1826 Kay journal extract, 18 February 1826.

<sup>140</sup>W.M.S., Young to Secretaries, 12 May 1825.

<sup>141</sup>W.M.S., 9 October 1825 Kay journal extract, 20 October 1825.

<sup>142</sup>W.M.S., 20 February 1825 Whitworth journal extract, n.d.

At a deeper level, some chiefs expressed genuine interest in the message though only Khama at Wesleyville and Dyani Tshatshu of the amaNtinde publicly professed allegiance to it. Ndlambe in particular showed a partiality for missionaries and spiritual matters, requesting that Young and Kay visit and pray for him on the numerous occasions that he was on his deathbed.<sup>143</sup> He was affected when told that Young had prayed for him before ever meeting him:

'What!' he said, 'pray for me before you saw me! that word sticks fast in my heart; that is just what I want. I have no people in this country that pray for me; my life has been sought by Kafirs, Boors, and English...and now that I hear an Englishmen say that he loves 'Slambie, and that he is come to do me good, this is a day that I never expected to see...'<sup>144</sup>

Of all the chiefs that the missionaries came into contact with at Mount Coke and Butterworth, their relationship with Ndlambe was certainly the warmest and paved the way for smooth relations with his successors.<sup>145</sup>

Ndlambe was not the only chief who showed an interest in Christianity. While van der Kemp was among the Xhosa, Ngqika asked for and received instruction from him.<sup>146</sup> He also listened to Joseph Williams' sermons and wept and prayed in the bushes afterward.<sup>147</sup> Ngqika confessed to Shrewsbury that

some years ago, he was deeply convinced of sin, and wept much before God in secret, but his great Men observing it, they remonstrated with him on the folly of a Great Chief in mourning, and sorrowing like a common

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<sup>143</sup>W.M.S., 20 June 1826 Kay journal extract, 30 July 1826; *ibid.*, 3 November 1826 Kay journal extract, January 1827; *ibid.*, Young to Secretaries, 16 September 1827; *ibid.*, 10 February 1828 Young journal extract, 31 [sic] April 1828. The missionaries visited him four times when he was 'nigh unto death'.

<sup>144</sup>Young, *Missionary Narrative*, pp. 22-23, 26-27. The next morning, Ndlambe's messenger said 'that 'Slambie was delighted with what he heard out of the book...and had been talking nearly all night about it.'

<sup>145</sup>W.M.S., Shrewsbury to Secretaries, 16 April 1830.

<sup>146</sup>Van der Kemp, *Transactions*, 8 February & 23-25 April 1800 journal extracts, pp. 413, 416.

<sup>147</sup>Shepherd, *Where Aloes Flame*, p. 92.

man. Unhappily he listened to their advice...<sup>148</sup>

Ngqika's son Matwa was also discouraged from converting, being told that the Christians were bewitching him.<sup>149</sup>

Other chiefs resisted Christianity because they thought it beneath their dignity:

An opinion prevails that religion is calculated to render the Caffre less manly. And hence, some of the chiefs will tell us that it is well enough for the old women and children, but too childish a thing for them to think about.<sup>150</sup>

One chief interested in the Gospel was persuaded by his fellow chiefs not to embrace it as it meant 'forsaking the customs of his country, and of adopting those of the English nation'<sup>151</sup> and a chief's son was similarly ridiculed for attending services on the station.<sup>152</sup>

When Dyani Tshatshu was converted and became an itinerant evangelist, some Xhosa protested that 'if their chiefs embrace Christianity it will separate them from their people as in his case'.<sup>153</sup> Chief Khama's conversion took place only after much deliberation, as he conceded to William Shaw:

He admits that nothing prevents his formally embracing Christianity but his fear of man. He waits to see whether some more powerful chief will not shew him the example and he would, he thinks, then immediately follow it. His people at present dread the idea, as they imagine it would be a change injurious to them.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>148</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 10 March 1827; W.M.S., Shrewsbury to Secretaries, 31 March 1827; A.C. Jordan, *Towards an African Literature* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1973), pp. 45-47. Moshoeshe also expressed concern for his sin and need for salvation to the Paris Evangelical Society Missionaries: Elphick, 'Africans and the Christian Campaign', p. 289.

<sup>149</sup>Matwa did become a Christian but was 'unstable as water': Williams, 'Missionaries', pp. 334-336.

<sup>150</sup>W.M.S., Kay to Secretaries, March 1827.

<sup>151</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 25 July 1829.

<sup>152</sup>Ayliff Journal, 15 April 1831.

<sup>153</sup>W.M.S., 14 April 1825 Whitworth journal extract, April 1825.

<sup>154</sup>Shaw, *Journal*, 19 December 1827 extract, p. 90.

No doubt the prohibition of polygamy discouraged many chiefs, as it did Mpondo chiefs,<sup>155</sup> as a chief's number of wives indicated his power and prestige and ensured progeny. However much certain aspects of the Gospel may have appealed to them, then, the chiefs realized that conversion was not advantageous to their leadership.<sup>156</sup>

Another reason the chiefs may have rejected Christian teachings was the important religious and symbolic role they played in African traditional society. As the most senior genealogical representative of the ruling lineage, the chief was both religious and secular leader.<sup>157</sup> He performed rituals to mediate between the ancestors and the living<sup>158</sup> and was the only person who could perform propitiatory sacrifices in times of national emergency.<sup>159</sup> His high political office also carried with it mystical attributes.<sup>160</sup> Symbolically, then, the community's life and well-being was thought to be connected with the strength and virility of the chief.<sup>161</sup> 'There is in the mind of the Caffre,' noted the missionary Henry Calderwood, 'an undefined impression that the chief has power to preserve.'<sup>162</sup> Conversion was therefore not only a matter of a chief accepting new beliefs: it meant reneging on crucial responsibilities toward his people.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>155</sup>Hunter, Reaction to Conquest, pp. 353-354.

<sup>156</sup>Etherington reports a similar situation in Natal, Pondoland, and Zululand, where some chiefs showed interest in Christianity but were held back by the ridicule of the people: Preachers, pp. 60-61.

<sup>157</sup>Staples, 'Ancestors', p. 163.

<sup>158</sup>Taylor, Primal Vision, p. 133; cf. Staples, 'Ancestors', p. 41.

<sup>159</sup>Hammond-Tooke, 'Worldview II', p. 350.

<sup>160</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 350.

<sup>161</sup>Soga, Ama-Xosa, p. 30; cf. Tempels, Bantu Philosophy, pp. 62-63; Smith, African Ideas, p. 82; Wilson & Thompson, Oxford History, vol. 1, p. 126.

<sup>162</sup>Calderwood, Caffres and Caffres Missions, p. 84.

<sup>163</sup>It is doubtful whether the missionaries would have allowed a Christian chief to continue performing traditional ceremonies.

Notwithstanding the disadvantages of conversion, the chiefs realized that amicable relations with the missionaries were in their interest. The intervention of William Shaw in attempting to have land restored to the Gqunukhwebe<sup>164</sup> that was confiscated in 1819 did not go unnoticed by other chiefs. The evangelists were allowed to settle in their country only because they served a purpose, as shown in Ndlambe's speech at the inauguration of Mount Coke:

'...today, I get a great Captain; today I have got an ear: he shall be to me also for eyes! Today, I see that I have friends in the world! I have been an earthworm, but today I creep out of the hole...the Name of Tslambie is great, but his character is bad among all the Nations, who, however, shall now see what he is.'<sup>165</sup>

Two Gqunukhwebe chiefs expressed purely material motives in allowing the Gospel to be preached:

When they had received a present of beads and brass wire, they were not sparing in flattering compliments. They said that we were their fathers, and they were our children, and that all the tribes beyond them began to see that Missionaries were their true friends. 'That word,' said they, 'is good; we thank you for your present, and should now be glad of some clothing also.'<sup>166</sup>

Flattery was also used by Hintsá to maintain positive relations with the Wesleyans, as when he sent this message:

He sees that the missionary is his real friend, and only gives him good counsel, and acknowledges that if he were not a very stupid man it would be impossible for him not to see at all times that the teacher is endeavouring to bring him into the way of righteousness. A frank confession like this must not, however, be overrated; it costs a Kaffir no sacrifice; for when he is defeated in argument, he had much rather make such an acknowledgement, than allow you to trouble him with any further application of the truth to his heart.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>164</sup>Duff, 'Wesleyan Strategy', p. 24.

<sup>165</sup>W.M.S., 3 July 1825 Kay journal extract, July 1825; cf. *ibid.*, 29 June 1825 Young journal extract, 4 October 1825.

<sup>166</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 27 November 1826.

<sup>167</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 14 January 1830. The missionaries were usually aware that flattery and adulation were often used in addressing a chief or headman: see Shaw, *My*

Kay was also under no illusions that altruism did not figure in the establishment of the stations:

Let no one imagine for a single moment, that, because a Chief or his Council favourably receive the Christian Missionary, they are therefore earnestly desirous of heartily embracing the Gospel....worldly policy is yet the grand and most influential motive, by which rulers of Kaffraria are, in general, actuated with regard to the establishment of Christian missions...<sup>168</sup>

Hence the intention of the chiefs in allowing missionaries to reside amongst them was to accrue political and material benefits.<sup>169</sup> Their initial attitude of indulgence and cautious curiosity only gave way to violent opposition once they understood the social and economic consequences of missionary teachings and stations.<sup>170</sup>

Soon after they arrived, the missionaries began to proclaim their message. As shown in Chapters 3 and 5, an integral part of their sermons was an attack on customs offensive to the preachers. The chiefs were publicly reprovved by the missionaries for allowing 'smelling out' ceremonies,<sup>171</sup> conducting business on the sabbath,<sup>172</sup> and in Ngqika's case, for drunkenness.<sup>173</sup> If this did not cause enough alarm, sermons against

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Mission, p. 102.

<sup>168</sup>W.M.S., 1 June 1830 Kay journal extract, 21 June 1830. According to Shrewsbury, these 'worldly' motives were the reason for the respect shown and protection granted the missionaries by the chiefs: *ibid.*, Shrewsbury to Secretaries, 31 March 1831; cf. Missionary Notices 136 (1827), 17 July 1826 Kay journal extract, p. 246; Papers Relative to the Wesleyan Missions (December 1831); Ayliff Journal, 29 October 1830.

<sup>169</sup>Williams and Etherington thoroughly examine these benefits, which included increased trade, representation in the colony, agricultural technology and, in Natal, various welfare services: Williams, 'Missionaries', Chapter 3; Etherington, Preachers, pp. 48-54.

<sup>170</sup>Hutchinson, 'Missionary Activity', p. 162. The Comaroffs report that Tswana chiefs were well aware of the dangers the missionaries posed to their authority and social system, however the benefits of having missionaries were too valuable to pass up: J. & J. Comaroff, 'Colonization of Consciousness', p. 271.

<sup>171</sup>W.M.S., 20 December 1829 Shrewsbury journal extract, 31 December 1831.

<sup>172</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 2-3 March 1828.

<sup>173</sup>W.M.S., 16 March 1827 Shaw journal extract, 4 February 1828.

bridewealth and polygamy threatened to undermine their social system. Suspicion began to mount when people were removed from their chief's authority by moving to the stations.<sup>174</sup> One of Hintsá's councillors anticipated these problems in asking,

as to the tendency of the Christian religion to support or weaken the authority of the chief, and those who held subordinate authority under him. The answer given was, that it not only allowed, but required obedience to authority in everything not sinful...<sup>175</sup>

In opposing the establishment of a station at Wesleyville, Ngqika stated that

...the very ants were complaining that the new thing [waggon] was breaking down their houses, and that there was no telling where these things would end.<sup>176</sup>

Far from being a trivial excuse, Ngqika discerned the thorough-going effects of the missionary message on his community.

The current explanation for the resolute opposition of chiefs in the Eastern Cape<sup>177</sup> to the Gospel is that the authority of the chiefs was threatened.<sup>178</sup> As shown in the foregoing, however, the attitude of the chiefs underwent a gradual transformation. They accepted missionaries for purely political or economic reasons. On a personal level, some of the chiefs were initially attracted to Christianity but did not pursue this interest for fear of losing the respect and loyalty of their people. As evangelization proceeded, they became acutely aware of the threat that it posed both to their authority and to the social fabric of their society. This generated concern, alarm, and finally open

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<sup>174</sup>Hutchinson, 'Missionary Activity', p. 169.

<sup>175</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 12 December 1826. 'In everything not sinful' proved to be the Pandora's box.

<sup>176</sup>Young, Missionary Narrative, p. 86.

<sup>177</sup>The resistance of the chiefs was also encountered in Natal and Zululand by the missionaries: Etherington, Preachers, pp.34-36, 40.

<sup>178</sup>Donovan Williams states that the issue was one of jurisdiction: 'Missionaries', pp. 322-329.

hostility by the mid-1830's.<sup>179</sup> Nevertheless, the initial resistance of the chiefs to Christianity was not so much a reaction to the undermining of their society as it was a realization that their personal interests were not served by conversion.

Although the chiefs' attitude could further or hinder missionary endeavours, the opposition of the chiefs alone could not stifle the response of the people. The chief's power was limited by his councillors, law and custom, and the necessity of keeping on good terms with his people.<sup>180</sup> The councillors were hereditary heads of commoner clan-sections<sup>181</sup> who could desert to a rival chief en masse, particularly in cases where land was abundant.<sup>182</sup> In this way, the councillors represented in some measure the opinions of the people as a whole and the chief had to rely on his generosity and popularity to attract and maintain followers.<sup>183</sup> An example of this limited influence is the conversion of two chiefs: when Dyani Tshatshu and Khama became Christians, their people did not follow suit.<sup>184</sup> Resistance to the Gospel was therefore not restricted to or controlled by the chief but was manifested by the people as a whole.<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>179</sup>Williams describes the deliberate campaign of the chiefs in the late 1830's and 1840's to thwart missionary progress. This included spreading rumours and encouraging rainmakers to compete with the missionaries: 'Missionaries', pp. 337-350.

<sup>180</sup>H.H. Dugmore, 'Rev. H.H. Dugmore's papers' in A Compendium of Kafir Laws and Customs, compiled by J. Maclean (Mount Coke, 1858; repr., Grahamstown, 1906), pp. 23-25; Hunter, Reaction to Conquest, pp. 392-394; Moodie, Ten Years, pp. 241-244; Rose, Four Years, p. 79; Soga, Ama-Xosa, pp. 11, 28-29; cf. le Vaillant, Travels, p. 292.

<sup>181</sup>Peires, 'Chiefs and Commoners', p. 126.

<sup>182</sup>Ibid., pp. 131-133.

<sup>183</sup>Van der Kemp, Transactions, p. 436; Lichtenstein, Travels, p. 287.

<sup>184</sup>Peires, House of Phalo, p. 78; Williams, 'Missionaries', pp. 333-334.

<sup>185</sup>Etherington also found that almost everyone in Natal, Pondoland, and Zululand resisted the Gospel regardless of age, class, or gender: Preachers, pp. 59-60.

## 5: AFRICAN PERCEPTIONS OF THE IMPACT OF THE MESSAGE ON THE COMMUNITY

The British culture with which the missionaries identified stressed individualism whereas African society was communal in nature. The Wesleyan message consequently had profound ramifications for the lifestyle of converts and the society from which they were removed. Another feature to be examined, then, is whether the Xhosa perceived the message to have implications for them as a community and if so, if these were viewed negatively or positively.

That the message had implications for community life was foreseen by some. When the missionaries asked a Thembu chief and his council for permission to establish a station, a councillor asked shrewdly,

‘And what songs will you sing? Is the great word you teach a new, or an old one? Was it given to you or your father? How did you derive it from them? How did God give it to them? Have your great men sent you? Have your fathers sent you? It is a great word and we will receive it when the other Great Captains have received it.’<sup>1</sup>

The speaker was concerned with the sanction of custom and the stability and continuity that it provided.

The myths of origin in traditional southern African societies relate the emergence of people as a community, including men, women, children, and animals.<sup>2</sup> The extensive kinship structure meant that a person was born into a plethora of interconnecting relationships comparable to a spider’s web: when one thread was touched, the rest vibrated.<sup>3</sup> Children grew up with a sense of security within and obligation to their group: there was no life apart from the community.<sup>4</sup> In such a close-knit circle,

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<sup>1</sup>W.M.S., 10 April 1825 Whitworth journal extract, April 1825.

<sup>2</sup>Setiloane, *African Theology*, p. 9.

<sup>3</sup>Tempels, *Bantu Philosophy*, p. 60.

<sup>4</sup>Taylor, *Primal Vision*, p. 95.

idiosyncrasy was frowned upon and invited a witchcraft or sorcery accusation.<sup>5</sup>

The mutual dependence of African society was expressed in various ways. Whether a person was male or female, old or young, a number of people bore responsibility for him/her. Parents were taken care of by their children,<sup>6</sup> illegitimate children became the responsibility of the mother's family, and widows would return to their family's homestead. This interdependence was expressed at ceremonial occasions, where Wilson noted that

rituals were primarily directed towards the well-being of the group; towards health and fertility for the community; and the emphasis was on the fact that kinsfolk and neighbours were members one of another.<sup>7</sup>

The emphasis on community in African traditional society was in marked contrast to individualistic Western societies: the African equivalent of 'I think, therefore I am' was 'I am because I belong'.<sup>8</sup>

Into this intricate network stepped the missionaries, who transmitted a Gospel that was revolutionary in its questioning of all societal structures.<sup>9</sup> The evangelists attacked all traditional institutions fundamentally opposed to Christianity and nineteenth century evangelical Protestantism.<sup>10</sup> The missionary's relationship to these customs was clearly spelled out by Shaw: 'The custom of the country is nothing. The Law of God is greater than any custom.'<sup>11</sup> Coupled with this message was the inadequate knowledge

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<sup>5</sup>Williams, 'Missionaries', pp. 314-318.

<sup>6</sup>Soga, *Ama-Xosa*, pp. 240, 248.

<sup>7</sup>Wilson, *Transformation*, p. 21.

<sup>8</sup>Setiloane, *African Theology*, p. 10.

<sup>9</sup>Wilson, *Missionaries*, pp. 3-4, 9.

<sup>10</sup>Slee, 'Wesleyan Methodism', p. 110.

<sup>11</sup>Shaw, *Journal*, 17 March 1829 extract, p. 153.

the evangelists had of the complexity of community relationships.<sup>12</sup> They proceeded to attack almost every custom, ritual, or ceremony they encountered, including polygamy, bridewealth, circumcision and initiation ceremonies, the 'levirate',<sup>13</sup> and wedding celebrations.<sup>14</sup>

Several abstract principles of the Gospel challenged African society in this way, such as the concept of universality. In small-scale societies there are no impersonal relations,<sup>15</sup> whereas in larger-scale societies, impersonal relations abound and are, in Christianity, encouraged. Hence the missionaries propagated the brotherhood of man as well as concern for people outside one's kinship and ethnic group. In African societies, responsibilities and obligations did not extend to groups outside the kinship/clan network.<sup>16</sup> The converts went counter to this inclination when they publicly prayed for their own chiefs as well as for Great Britain and their feared enemy, Shaka.<sup>17</sup>

Another concept that threatened to undermine relationships in African society was the missionary's notion of equality. When Hintsá called himself Shrewsbury's 'dog' upon receiving beads from him, the missionary responded at length:

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<sup>12</sup>The same held true for Nigeria, where missionaries ignored or misconceived the functions of the customs and institutions of traditional African society: Ayandele, *Nigeria*, p. 330.

<sup>13</sup>According to Xhosa custom, a man would marry his dead brother's wife to produce children for the deceased. That missionary objections to this were based on British culture is shown by the fact that this practice was recommended in the Old Testament.

<sup>14</sup>See Williams, 'Missionaries', pp. 306-318 for a list of the customs and festivities censured. The practice of assailing African customs was criticized by African converts in the future: see Wauchope, *Missionaries*, pp. 7, 14. John Henderson Soga adopted this critical attitude throughout his book, *Life and Customs of the Ama-Xosa*.

<sup>15</sup>Wilson, *Transformation*, p.17.

<sup>16</sup>Taylor, *Primal Vision*, p. 119.

<sup>17</sup>W.M.S., Shrewsbury to Secretaries, 30 September 1828; *ibid.*, 23 April 1830 Kay journal extract, 28 April 1830.

I remarked first, that I was grieved to hear such a word out of his mouth, and hoped never to have it repeated to me, since he was my Chief, while I lived in the Country, as well as the Ruler of his own people...But secondly, I endeavoured to convince him, that...the expression was too degrading to be used on any occasion, or in reference to any human being: that the poorest Fingo or meanest slave was a man, equal in his nature, and in his natural rights, to Hintsas...<sup>18</sup>

In Xhosa society, the chief was not distinguished from his followers by his dress or habitation, save for the tiger-skin mantle he wore and the elephant tail hung outside his hut.<sup>19</sup> To entrench the distinction between chief and commoners, the latter were called 'dogs' or 'black men' and the chief was referred to as 'bull' or 'elephant'.<sup>20</sup> Shrewsbury misinterpreted the term 'dog' as being degrading and oppressive when it was actually a term of differentiation.

Women were likewise presented as 'equals'. The missionaries believed that the Xhosa adhered to 'the Pagan Principle "What is a woman in comparison of a man?"'<sup>21</sup> They perceived women to be in an inferior position in Xhosa society and pitied them for the back-breaking labour they endured: Steedman observed that 'whilst he idly lounges about...she must be busily employed'.<sup>22</sup> The new division of labour promoted on the stations required men to work in the fields - an occupation practised exclusively by females in Xhosa society<sup>23</sup> - and women were relegated to domestic labour.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 20 November 1827. In this context, Hintsas was probably underscoring his superiority to Shrewsbury in referring to himself as 'his dog'.

<sup>19</sup>Rose, Four Years, pp. 152, 183-184; Shaw, My Mission, pp. 86, 152.

<sup>20</sup>Peires, 'Chiefs and Commoners', p. 128; cf. Rose, Four Years, pp. 152, 179.

<sup>21</sup>W.M.S., 12 & 18 December 1825 Kay journal extracts, 18 February 1826.

<sup>22</sup>Steedman, Wanderings, pp. 45-46. Judging by the rate at which missionary wives died on the mission field (see note 113, p. 36 above), it is doubtful whether the domestic work of European wives was any less backbreaking than that done by African women.

<sup>23</sup>It was not considered honourable for men to work in the fields: Peires, House of Phalo, p. 107; cf. Shaw, 'Material Culture', p. 90.

William Shaw was known as the 'shield of women' in Africa,<sup>25</sup> but whether this name was given to him by women or by his colleagues is uncertain.

It is disappointing that there are no comments in the missionary correspondence regarding initial African perceptions of the ramifications of equality and universality.<sup>26</sup> It is consequently difficult to gauge the extent to which these teachings influenced African rejection of Christianity.

The more frequently cited examples of threats to communal solidarity concerned polygamy and bridewealth (*ikhazi*).<sup>27</sup> The missionaries viewed polygamy as sinful and bridewealth as the 'selling of their daughters in marriage'.<sup>28</sup> Although they did not have a complete understanding of the customs, they did perceive that issues such as polygamy were complex:

It so connects itself with all their domestic and civil concerns, that to destroy it seems more difficult than to break the power of caste in India.<sup>29</sup>

The attack on these customs therefore caused much controversy among Xhosa listeners.

Bridewealth was a custom of protection. A man would come to an agreement with the parents of the bride as to the number of cattle that were to be transferred.

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<sup>24</sup>Hutchinson, 'Missionary Activity', p. 173. The use of the plough hastened this shift because only men were allowed to handle the oxen used in ploughing: J. & J. Comaroff, 'Colonization of Consciousness', pp. 279, 289.

<sup>25</sup>Young, Narrative, p. 87; Steedman, Wanderings, pp. 49-50.

<sup>26</sup>I.W. Wauchope claims that missionaries were criticized for these teachings: Missionaries, p. 4. In Natal, Cetshwayo objected to missionary teachings on the role of women: Etherington, Preachers, p. 81.

<sup>27</sup>The passage of cattle from the groom's to the bride's family was termed *ukulobola*; the cattle themselves were called *ikhazi*.

<sup>28</sup>W.M.S., 27 June 1830 Kay journal extract, August 1830; *ibid.*, Shrewsbury to Secretaries, 30 June 1831; Dugmore, 'Papers', pp. 52-53. Kay and Dugmore claimed that women were 'marketable articles' and yet noted that their husbands were not free to sell them.

<sup>29</sup>W.M.S., Shrewsbury to Secretaries, 30 June 1831.

These cattle would pass into the possession of the prospective wife's family and the woman's rights were transferred to the groom's family.<sup>30</sup> If the wife subsequently left her husband without just cause,<sup>31</sup> he could rightfully demand the return of his property.<sup>32</sup> Likewise, if the man mistreated his wife, he could procure her return by paying a fine to the wife's family and enduring their scolding; if he chose not to, she could live on any homestead where her *ikhazi* were found.<sup>33</sup> It was therefore a custom that protected the husband, wife, and their respective families.<sup>34</sup> Women recognized this function of bridewealth and were often its greatest defenders.<sup>35</sup>

Another custom the Wesleyans found troublesome was polygamy. William Shaw recognized the difficulties that a prohibition of it created: if a polygamist wished to give up his wives, his life was sometimes threatened<sup>36</sup> and many of his relationships in the community affected.<sup>37</sup> Shaw therefore wrote to the Society in London requesting that polygamists should not be forced to give up their wives unless their wives consented, and that the wives of polygamists should not be forced to leave without their husband's

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<sup>30</sup>Preston-Whyte, 'Kinship and Marriage', pp. 187-188. This may have discouraged some women from converting: as a wife had no legal control over her children, she could not take them with her.

<sup>31</sup>Whether 'just cause' existed was decided by the chief and his councillors (*amaphakathi*).

<sup>32</sup>Hunter, Reaction to Conquest, p. 210.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 42, 213.

<sup>34</sup>Soga gives a persuasive argument for the protections provided: Ama-Xosa, pp. 263-267.

<sup>35</sup>Hutchinson, 'Missionary Activity', pp. 165-166. This held true also for Natal and East Africa: Etherington, Preachers, p. 61; Beidelman, Colonial Evangelism, p. 143.

<sup>36</sup>W.M.S., Shaw to Secretaries, 8 May 1826. The wives' families would understandably have been upset and offended by the sending away of their kin.

<sup>37</sup>W.M.S., Shaw to Secretaries, 11 August 1827.

consent.<sup>38</sup> The Society however had a policy forbidding polygamy in all its spheres of labour.<sup>39</sup>

The missionaries frequently remonstrated with the chiefs in regard to polygamy and criticized it in their sermons. There was stiff opposition to this and there are no indications in the literature that the message had any impact upon the practice of polygamy among non-converts during this period. Hints's *amaphakathi* (councillors) noted that the Gospel 'was calculated to...diminish their number of wives, "to which," said one, "we will never consent."<sup>40</sup> One man was told by the missionary interpreter that he could have only one wife:

'But,' said the old man, 'if we have already taken more than one woman to wife, how then?' 'Why then,' replied Boosak, 'you are guilty before God.' 'Ah then,' said the poor old sensualist, 'the door is shut.'<sup>41</sup>

The number of wives a man had were an indication of his wealth and status<sup>42</sup> which was one of the reasons that men were reluctant to forego polygamy.<sup>43</sup>

Men were not alone in their opposition to this missionary teaching. Polygamy gave women a great deal of independence, for each wife formed a 'house' and was

<sup>38</sup>W.M.S., Shaw to Secretaries, 8 May 1826.

<sup>39</sup>Instructions, VII (8): 'No man, living in a state of polygamy, is to be admitted a member, or even on trial, who will not consent to live with one woman as his wife...'. This directive was given to missionaries of the West Indies but was considered 'strictly obligatory on all others': *ibid.*, VII (bottom). Missionaries in Nigeria similarly refused to compromise on polygamy: Ayandele, Nigeria, p. 335.

<sup>40</sup>W.M.S., 13 April 1830 Kay journal extract, 24 April 1830.

<sup>41</sup>Shaw, Journal, 28 February 1828 extract, p. 104. The quote indicates that missionaries believed men resisted giving up their wives for solely 'sensual' reasons and not due to the tremendous social disruption it caused. Another man also gave the prohibition of polygamy as his reason for rejecting the Gospel: W.M.S., 19 March 1825 Whitworth journal extract, n.d.

<sup>42</sup>Dugmore, 'Papers', p. 43; Shaw, My Mission, p. 164.

<sup>43</sup>Hunter theorized that the preponderance of females among Mpondo converts was due to the greater attachment that the men had to polygamy: Reaction to Conquest, p. 354.

allocated a dwelling, fields, and cattle over which she had sole control.<sup>44</sup> The custom also allowed the burden of work around the homestead to be divided, which may account for women's support of the institution.<sup>45</sup> The ban on polygamy on the stations was thus no doubt a major factor in discouraging conversion.<sup>46</sup>

Conversion of unmarried men and women created problems. If a prospective bridegroom refused to hand over the *ikhazi* and the bride married him despite this, her family would suffer financial loss and the economic balance of the community would be upset. As the father of one girl stated, 'How can we give up a custom which was established by our forefathers and which continues to be one of our chief sources of profit?'<sup>47</sup> Because discontinuance of the practice among converts generated so much opposition, bridewealth was by 1828 accepted and incorporated into the Wesleyan marriage ceremony.<sup>48</sup>

In addition to the attack on specific customs, the threat that the Gospel posed to the cohesion of African society as a whole was considerable. A convert was expected to live under the missionary's guidance,<sup>49</sup> as

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<sup>44</sup>Preston-Whyte, 'Kinship and Marriage', pp. 179-180; Hunter, Reaction to Conquest, p. 117.

<sup>45</sup>Steedman, Wanderings, p. 240.

<sup>46</sup>Hutchinson, 'Missionary Activity', pp. 170-171. Monogamy was particularly onerous if the wife was unable to bear children.

<sup>47</sup>W.M.S., 23 August 1830 Kay journal extract, August 1830. The word 'profit' is probably an interpretation of Kay's since it fit his view of *ukulobola* as a commercial transaction. A more likely word used by the father would have been 'livelihood' or 'support'.

<sup>48</sup>W.M.S., Shrewsbury to Secretaries, 30 June 1828. Ayliff reported that a man came and asked him 'whether it was so that I gave away wives, and took no pay for them': Ayliff Journal, 21 July 1833.

<sup>49</sup>A notable exception to this rule was the influential councillor 'Old Soga' (father of Tiyo) who, despite faithfully holding to Christianity, retained his eight wives and refused to move to Tyhume station. He became the first Xhosa to introduce irrigation and the plough into Xhosaland: Hodgson, 'Soga and Dukwana', pp. 190-195; Peires,

they would ask too much if they expected converts to live a Christian life amid the down-drag of their heathen environment, so that some arrangement for accommodating them within the bounds of a mission station seemed a necessity.<sup>50</sup>

The purpose of gathering converts on stations was therefore to isolate them from their traditional environment,<sup>51</sup> the strategy which was also behind the plan to establish a school for Xhosa children in Grahamstown.<sup>52</sup> There may have been a change in strategy at Butterworth in the 1830's, when two men baptized were the first converts who did not live on the station.<sup>53</sup>

Conversion was an individual act which carried many implications for the community from which its members were removed.<sup>54</sup> New social groups were formed in congregations which could conflict with existing kinship groups.<sup>55</sup> This could cause considerable dislocation in the community, for social and economic relations were

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House of Phalo, p. 107.

<sup>50</sup>Shepherd, Where Aloes Flame, p. 99.

<sup>51</sup>Hutchinson, 'Missionary Activity', p. 162. Christians were also expected to leave their families in Nigeria: Ayandele, Nigeria, p. 332.

<sup>52</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 7 October 1827.

<sup>53</sup>Ayliff Journal, 9 November 1834. These two were probably the ones who stated that they wanted to serve God at their own homesteads: Ayliff Journal, 12 January 1834. They appear to have come from the same homestead and could therefore reinforce each other in their beliefs, which may explain why they were allowed to live away from the station.

<sup>54</sup>Shorter, African Culture, p. 75. After 1857, missionaries encouraged converts to remain among their people, of which Tiyo Soga was a major proponent: Wilson & Thompson, Oxford History, vol. 1, p. 266; cf. Pauw, Christianity and Xhosa Tradition, p. 24. Henry Callaway stood out among Zulu missionaries in that he advocated this approach at the outset of his labours: Etherington, 'Missionary Doctors', p. 80. He was as unsuccessful as his colleagues in terms of conversions, however if he still required them to abstain from 'sinful' activities such as dances, this would still effectively cut them off from their community.

<sup>55</sup>Hunter, Reaction to Conquest, p. 355. The ideal situation was when entire homesteads placed themselves under missionary instruction. This happened twice at Butterworth: Ayliff Journal, 8, 10, 12 January 1834 & 11 July 1834.

typically kinship relations ordered by kinship principles.<sup>56</sup> For instance, if the most senior member of a homestead was converted and removed to a station with one wife, he relinquished the responsibilities that he carried for his other wives and their children. His religious role as mediator to the ancestors through ritual killing<sup>57</sup> would also be placed in doubt. Hunter noted that among the Mpondo, the convert's remaining family members at the homestead were reluctant to assume these duties as long as the most senior member of their lineage remained alive.<sup>58</sup>

Living under missionary tutelage also had ramifications for the respect for seniors, upon which the social and political system among the Cape Nguni was based.<sup>59</sup> A child respected all its elders and a son was expected to work for and consult the father in all important economic transactions and vice versa.<sup>60</sup> If a son were converted, the father might not be sought for advice and his lifestyle would possibly be criticized. Kay asked an African convert why parents were not sending their children to school, to which the man replied,

'...because they hear, that the Word of God exposes their bad deeds, and they fear, lest the children, by obtaining a knowledge of it, should be able to reprove them for their wicked doings.'<sup>61</sup>

Africans realized the threat that school teachings posed for their traditions, identity, and

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<sup>56</sup>Preston-Whyte, 'Kinship and Marriage', p. 177.

<sup>57</sup>Taylor, Primal Vision, p. 102; Tempels, Bantu Philosophy, p. 156; Hammond-Tooke, 'Worldview II', p. 346.

<sup>58</sup>Hunter, Reaction to Conquest, p. 353.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 266.

<sup>60</sup>Hunter, Reaction to Conquest, pp. 25-26. Alberti also reported that parents were respected and that disobedience was treated with scorn by the community: Tribal Life, p. 57.

<sup>61</sup>W.M.S., 19 November & 25 December 1826 Kay journal extracts, January 1827; Williams, 'Missionaries', pp. 236-238.

authority and consequently discouraged school attendance.<sup>62</sup> Rather than reinforcing concepts such as filial piety and respect for elders, then, the mission station could at times subvert them.

The consequences extended to relationships beyond the homestead. In giving up polygamy, for example, the man would have his wives' families to deal with.<sup>63</sup> The convert would also be effectively removed from the chief's jurisdiction<sup>64</sup> because loyalty to the faith was more important than loyalty to the chief.<sup>65</sup> A number of homesteads, involving many relationships, would thus be significantly affected by the removal of one member.<sup>66</sup> An example of the disruption which conversion could cause was in Wesleyville. A chief's wife was affected by a sermon and retold it to her daughter, who was converted and refused to marry the polygamist planned for her. Her mother followed her to the station.<sup>67</sup> This impact upon the smallest unit of African society probably explains why the Natal Nguni presented such a solid front of resistance to Christianity despite the considerable extent of communal fragmentation.<sup>68</sup>

In the light of the tremendous repercussions that conversions had for the

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<sup>62</sup>Ashley, 'African Education', pp. 200-202. During this period, the schools did not play a central part in evangelization due to irregular attendance and the lack of time and teacher training on the part of the missionaries: Slee, 'Wesleyan Methodism', pp. 115-116. Africans did not view education as a route to social advancement until the frontier closed: Elphick, 'Africans and the Christian Campaign', p. 292.

<sup>63</sup>Sending a wife home due to conversion would not have been just cause for the man, meaning his *ikhazi* would not be returned to him.

<sup>64</sup>Wilson states that the missionaries consequently became the rivals of the chiefs: Wilson & Thompson, Oxford History, vol. 1, p. 266; cf. du Plessis, History of Christian Missions, p. 199; Pauw, Christianity and Xhosa Tradition, p. 21.

<sup>65</sup>Hunter, Reaction to Conquest, p. 355.

<sup>66</sup>In Natal, Africans perceived that Christianity led to a deterioration in family relationships: Etherington, Preachers, p. 64.

<sup>67</sup>Young, Narrative, pp. 97-109. The girl went to the station 10 days before her impending marriage, which must have been a powerful motive for residing there.

<sup>68</sup>Etherington, Preachers, p. 55.

community, it is not surprising that once the first Xhosa had been converted, there began a transition from passive to active resistance to the Gospel.<sup>69</sup> As Stephen Kay noted,

No sooner is it apparent that any one feels the power of the word preached than he immediately becomes the object of scorn and derision amongst his companions and friends; who at once combine against him, and delight in throwing obstacles in his way, and in diverting his attention from the things spoken by us.<sup>70</sup>

Anyone contemplating the change was either pressured not to, as was Chief Khama of Wesleyville,<sup>71</sup> or the attempt was made to persuade the converts into leaving the station.<sup>72</sup> Others were told conversion meant 'reviling ...and forsaking the customs of [the] forefathers'<sup>73</sup> or were threatened with the loss of their goods and in serious cases, with loss of life.<sup>74</sup> The intimidation created tremendous stress for the converts, one of whom was

in danger of losing his senses, and already half a madman. Several instances of a similar nature have occurred; and alas! The fear of man generally proves a fatal snare: since those who do not reside upon the station have not yet the courage to brave the frowns of the world, and sustain the loss of their worldly all, which would probably follow an open and decided avowal of faith in Christ Jesus.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>69</sup>Etherington records the same trend in Natal: Preachers, pp. 57-58.

<sup>70</sup>Missionary Notices 143 (1827), 11 March 1827 Kay journal extract, p. 357.

<sup>71</sup>W.M.S., 20 March 1825 Whitworth journal extract, n.d.

<sup>72</sup>Ayliff Journal, 11 June 1831; Missionary Notices 189 (1831), Ayliff letter, 13 December 1830, p. 518.

<sup>73</sup>Ayliff Journal, 5 July 1834.

<sup>74</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 25 July 1829; W.M.S., 25 December 1829 Shrewsbury journal extract, 31 December 1829; *ibid.*, Kay to Secretaries, 14 March 1830; Young, A Missionary Narrative, pp. 38-39; Ayliff Journal, 18 July 1831 & 12 January 1834. Although such threats are mentioned, no specific instances are given when property was confiscated or a life taken.

<sup>75</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 25 July 1829. Since little more information is given on this man, who was Mfengu, it is not possible to ascertain if he was emotionally unstable to begin with. A woman who began to believe in God was similarly accused of going mad: *ibid.*, 24 August 1828.

To remain committed to the message under these circumstances was a severe trial for those interested in the Gospel:

a respectable native master of a kraal, who for some years has regularly attended the services, has signified his intention of shortly removing near to the station, that he and his people may attend the services, and be better enabled to make a stand against the customs of the country.<sup>76</sup>

This family and community pressure was no doubt the major reason why the converts were very concerned and prayed about unconverted relatives and their conduct.<sup>77</sup> There was thus little choice left to the African: s/he either resisted the message or accepted it and moved to the station.<sup>78</sup>

The station to which the convert relocated was not a model community, for many Africans moved to the stations for motives that were anything but religious.<sup>79</sup> Many were physically disadvantaged, such as lepers, the handicapped, blind, and aged.<sup>80</sup> Others sought refuge either from their chiefs, witchcraft accusations,<sup>81</sup> or unfavourable marriages. A number found the economic benefits attractive, such as the use of land and irrigation networks.<sup>82</sup> Ayliff remarked that 'the people connected with us are the

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<sup>76</sup>Wesleyan Reports (1835), Mount Coke report, p. 43.

<sup>77</sup>Ayliff Journal, 15 July 1831.

<sup>78</sup>Those who attempted to remain among their people did not usually succeed: 'their souls do not greatly prosper,' said Shrewsbury: W.M.S., Shrewsbury to Secretaries, 30 September 1831.

<sup>79</sup>The following sources list the reasons for which people came to stations: Williams, 'Missionaries', p. 276; van Calker, Hundert Jahre, p. 34; Hutchinson, 'Missionary Activity', pp. 163-164; Peires, 'History', p. 78; Etherington, Preachers, pp. 33, 67-68, 75, 87, 90-99. The motives for finding refuge in the church were similar throughout Africa: Shorter, African Culture, p. 81.

<sup>80</sup>Several old people have come here to die and be buried, rather than be abandoned by their relatives to the wolves...': W.M.S., 3-12 September 1831 Shrewsbury journal extract, 31 December 1831. This may account for the rumour that 'people die so much on the School': Ayliff Journal, 25 June 1832.

<sup>81</sup>Ayliff Journal, 16 July 1833.

<sup>82</sup>Shrewsbury reported that six families - none of them polygamists - had joined the station for the sole purpose of cultivating land: Shrewsbury Journal, 19 November 1827.

poor of the land; the greater part of them have nothing when they come to us'.<sup>83</sup> In the Butterworth report for 1833, Ayliff noted the benefits that accrued to these people:

In the increase of their comforts in clothing, and of their cattle and corn land, the people prove that godliness is profitable for all things.<sup>84</sup>

In short, the station residents were usually 'fringe elements' of their communities and did not represent a cross-section of Xhosa society.<sup>85</sup>

Because many of these people had been socially isolated in their own societies, the stations developed reputations for being 'hotbeds of vice',<sup>86</sup> 'haunts of disreputable characters with libertine habits',<sup>87</sup> and 'thickets for witches'.<sup>88</sup> No doubt there was adequate foundation for these charges, for customary ties were loosened on the stations and there may have been some conflict on the stations due to the variegated ethnic background of the inhabitants.<sup>89</sup> Van Calker points out that an aggravating factor may have been the higher population density: as pastoralists, the people were accustomed to having considerable distance around their homesteads.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>83</sup>W.M.S., 5 December 1834 Ayliff journal extract, 12 June 1835.

<sup>84</sup>Wesleyan Reports (1834), Butterworth report, p. 48.

<sup>85</sup>The fact that 'fringe' elements were attracted to the stations was not necessarily seen negatively by the missionaries; they were familiar with the Bible passage in I Corinthians 1:27-28: 'But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.'

<sup>86</sup>Whiteside, Methodist Church, p. 192.

<sup>87</sup>Etherington, Preachers, p. 67.

<sup>88</sup>W.M.S., Ayliff to Secretaries, 1 July 1834.

<sup>89</sup>Jarle Simensen, 'Religious Change as Transaction: The Norwegian Mission to Zululand South Africa 1850-1906', Journal of Religion in Africa, 16 (2) 1986, p. 93; Williams, 'Mission Stations', Part I, p. 47. In Grahamstown, the Wesleyans separated the Khoikhoi and Xhosa into two congregations due to conflicts between them: Shaw, My Mission, p. 26. The differences in ethnic composition and lifestyle led to considerable friction between African and station societies in Natal: Etherington, Preachers, p. 70; such conflicts are not recorded in the period under study.

<sup>90</sup>Van Calker, Hundert Jahre, p. 34.

The missionaries envisaged their converts being transformed into godly people which, due to Wesleyan ethnocentrism, meant conforming to the evangelical values of industry, thrift, and temperance.<sup>91</sup> The converts' thought and behaviour was remarkably different from that of other Africans, with square houses, western clothing, monogamy, and a prohibition against traditional festivals being the standard set by the missionaries.<sup>92</sup> When Ayliff saw Africans attending services with European clothes, he extolled this as a sign that civilization 'had manifestly followed the influence of the Gospel'.<sup>93</sup> Steedman voiced missionary aspirations when he stated,

the station will...not only resemble an English village in external appearance, but the inhabitants, casting off their kaross for European apparel, will, through the indefatigable exertions of their teachers, represent in themselves the manners and habits of an English people.<sup>94</sup>

Converts were therefore expected to conform both culturally and religiously to the lifestyle of the missionaries.

The mission stations also presented a different form of economic organization, for capitalism was the 'norm' for British evangelicals. The capitalist model contrasted with the African one: whereas a European's position depended upon endeavours, the African was born into a role and status.<sup>95</sup> European notions of private property, individualism, and the work ethic contrasted sharply with the sharing of produce in African societies.<sup>96</sup>

Much emphasis was put particularly on private property, rights to which were

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<sup>91</sup>Slee, 'Wesleyan Methodism', p. 110.

<sup>92</sup>Wilson & Thompson, Oxford History, vol. 1, p. 266ff; cf. Pauw, Christianity and Xhosa Tradition, p. 21; Elphick, 'Africans and the Christian Campaign', p. 282.

<sup>93</sup>Ayliff Journal, 17 October 1830.

<sup>94</sup>Steedman, Wanderings, p. 34.

<sup>95</sup>Warren, Social History, p. 160.

<sup>96</sup>Crehan, 'Khoi, Boer, and Missionary', pp. 127-131.

'trampled upon with impunity' by Africans, according to Kay.<sup>97</sup> Among the Xhosa, land was owned by the chief but possessed by the people.<sup>98</sup> Private ownership would, in the missionaries' view, motivate the residents to greater industry and productivity.<sup>99</sup> Along with private ownership went individual cultivation. Through their own labour and land, station people were encouraged to accumulate a surplus which would accrue to them personally.<sup>100</sup> Converts were accordingly encouraged to work for wealth, not for the welfare of the group,<sup>101</sup> and to see themselves as separate from and in competition with their neighbours.<sup>102</sup>

When agriculture was unable to supply them with a livelihood, other methods were studied, as this letter to the Graham's Town Journal by William Shepstone of Wesleyville indicates:

I should be much obliged to any of your correspondents if they could furnish some plan of employment for the inhabitants of a Kafir mission village, simple in itself, and within the Kafir grasp, by which means they may add to their own comfort, as well as become more useful members of civil society.<sup>103</sup>

Many new skills were consequently taught to station residents, such as waggon-driving, thatching, and plastering.<sup>104</sup> Through the learning of skills and crafts and adaption to wage labour, the stations were being transformed by the missionaries into labour

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<sup>97</sup>Papers Relative to the Wesleyan Missions (December 1831), Kay report.

<sup>98</sup>Peires, 'Chiefs and Commoners'; pp. 130-131; Dugmore, 'Papers', p. 149; cf. Hunter, Reaction to Conquest, pp. 112-113; Steedman, Wanderings, p. 242.

<sup>99</sup>Hintsa once facetiously remarked to Ayliff that 'he felt a pleasure in coming to the station, because he saw so much work done': Missionary Notices 189 (1831), Ayliff letter, 13 December 1830, p. 518.

<sup>100</sup>J. & J. Comaroff, 'Colonization of Consciousness', p. 278.

<sup>101</sup>Cf. Ilogu, Ibo Culture, p. 94.

<sup>102</sup>Crehan, 'Khoi, Boer and Missionary', p. 134.

<sup>103</sup>Graham's Town Journal, 28 August 1834.

<sup>104</sup>Williams, 'Mission Stations', Part I, p. 46.

reservoirs.<sup>105</sup> Station residents apparently adapted so well to wage labour that they refused to help the missionary make a kraal unless paid by him.<sup>106</sup>

European values were reflected in every facet of the station, including the layout of the mission villages. Shrewsbury described Mount Coke a year after its establishment:

a few white-washed cottages...are erected upon it...a temporary residence has been built for [Kay's] family, a school-room for Caffre-children...and a carpenter's shop; a large piece of ground below these dwellings has been enclosed, one half of which is laid out for an orchard, and the other half planted with Indian corn...a good kitchen garden supplies them tolerably well with vegetables, which grow abundantly on a flat below the enclosed ground...Over the river and on the rising ground opposite to Mount Coke are a few patches of ploughed land, which some of the people connected with the mission have prepared for their own use.<sup>107</sup>

The 'cottages' mentioned above were not simply a superficial change in lifestyle but expressed the values of private property, individualism, and the nuclear family.<sup>108</sup> Xhosa huts were circular and therefore could not be divided; European homes by contrast had rooms which emphasized the privacy and individualism of their occupants. Cottages also ensured the permanent settlement of the station residents instead of their 'partially wandering life' which Xhosa huts made possible.<sup>109</sup> This was not lost on William Shaw, who stated that

it will be so far highly gratifying to see a number of natives living together in decent cottages, instead of their miserable straw huts; this change in their houses will imperceptibly draw after it a change of habits, which is a matter of much more consequence.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>105</sup>Hutchinson, 'Missionary Activity', p. 160.

<sup>106</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 26 April 1831.

<sup>107</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 4 December 1826; cf. Wesleyan Reports (1824), Shaw letter, 10 April 1824 for a similar description of Wesleyville.

<sup>108</sup>Williams, 'Mission Stations', Part 1, pp. 35-36.

<sup>109</sup>Wesleyan Reports (1826), Shaw letter, 26 April 1826, pp. 40-41.

<sup>110</sup>Wesleyan Reports (1824), Shaw letter, 10 April 1824, p. 52.

The cultural transition for the converts was not an easy one. In rejecting the ancestor cult, they were rejecting the traditional social order<sup>111</sup> and were cutting themselves off from the life-giving force of the ancestors.<sup>112</sup> Important ceremonies that were proscribed included circumcision, which was important in teaching a boy traditional beliefs as well as his role in the community.<sup>113</sup> The station residents felt torn between heathen and Christian beliefs,<sup>114</sup> facing persuasion from their relatives to join in community activities and condemnation from the missionaries if they did.<sup>115</sup>

Traditional prohibitions may also have presented complications on the stations. Stringent rules of etiquette (*hlonipha*) were followed in Xhosa society, which specified that a girl could not say words which contained the syllables of her father-in-law's name. How this worked itself out on the station is unknown; Steedman did note that missionaries had problems assembling people for worship as women were not to be in the presence of their male in-laws.<sup>116</sup>

The Christianity of station people was often only outward, for traditional life still

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<sup>111</sup>Staples, 'Ancestors', p. 215.

<sup>112</sup>Hunter, Reaction to Conquest, p. 234; Tempels, Bantu Philosophy, p. 156. Ayliff reported that some converts were secretly offering food to the ancestors when their children were sick: W.M.S., Ayliff to Secretaries, 1 July 1834. This clandestine affiliation with the ancestor cult continues among Xhosa Christians to the present day: Staples, 'Ancestors', p. 35.

<sup>113</sup>Warner, 'Notes', pp. 97-100. Many girls scorned uncircumcised men and refused to marry them: Dugmore, 'Papers', p. 157; Hutchinson, 'Missionary Activity', pp. 173-174.

<sup>114</sup>Horton Davies and R.H.W. Shepherd, South African Missions 1800-1950 (London, 1954), pp. 165-169.

<sup>115</sup>One catechumen was expelled when he attended a dance and did not repent enthusiastically enough; he did not subsequently return to the station: W.M.S., 1 January & 16 April 1832 Shrewsbury journal extracts, 31 December 1832.

<sup>116</sup>Steedman, Wanderings, p. 242. J.C. Warner thought the tradition unfortunate as a woman was 'debarred from performing all those kindly offices toward the elders of her husband's family, which nature dictates, and Christianity commands': 'Notes', pp. 95-96.

exerted a great appeal.<sup>117</sup> Ayliff reproved three boys who had sneaked away from the station to be circumcised;<sup>118</sup> a year later, a family left the station due to Ayliff's opposition to the circumcision of their two sons.<sup>119</sup> A number of people were excluded from the stations for such behaviour and there are two accounts of 'backsliders' who returned to the station after some years' absence.<sup>120</sup> It is possible that, although station life was a difficult adjustment, those who had lived at the mission for a while found it difficult to live elsewhere.

The new religious beliefs thus carried far-reaching changes for converts or station residents. Moodie saw that the cultural changes encumbered them:

we need not feel much surprised at the general disinclination evinced by the Kaffres for the Christian religion, which is exhibited in such unattractive colours to a lively people. It appears to me that one of the great errors into which the missionaries have fallen, is their endeavouring to effect too much at once, instead of confining themselves, in the first instance, to the simpler and more comprehensible truths of our religion.<sup>121</sup>

Although the stations later became centres of education, trade and agriculture<sup>122</sup> and accordingly facilitated the transition from a preliterate tribal to a peasant society,<sup>123</sup> their influence on Xhosa society at large had a limited effect during the initial period.

The thought and lifestyle of converts was not lost on their countrymen, for evangelical conversion was dramatic and entailed a radical change in conduct.<sup>124</sup> Africans who accepted the message displayed tendencies discomfiting to their

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<sup>117</sup>Cf. Ayandele, Nigeria, p. 340.

<sup>118</sup>Ayliff Journal, 30 March 1833.

<sup>119</sup>Ayliff Journal, 2 March 1834.

<sup>120</sup>Ayliff Journal, 4 July 1834; Backhouse, Narrative, p. 214.

<sup>121</sup>Moodie, Ten Years, vol. 2, p. 281.

<sup>122</sup>Whiteside, Methodist Church, p. 198.

<sup>123</sup>Wilson & Thompson, Oxford History, vol. 1, pp. 238-239.

<sup>124</sup>Beidelman, Colonial Evangelism, pp. 18, 152.

companions:

Although a young man of much natural vivacity, such has been his deep thoughtfulness during the last week, that a smile can scarcely be extorted from him by his companions, who now lay at and mock him daily.<sup>125</sup>

The displays of emotion at services were clearly not typical of Xhosa society, for Shrewsbury commented, 'It is a rare thing to see religious feeling manifested, except on a mission station'.<sup>126</sup> One man left a service because 'he was ashamed to be seen to yield before the congregation'.<sup>127</sup> The weeping and mourning during services by men and women alike was consequently upsetting to observers, who were 'disposed to leave the chapel before the service was over'.<sup>128</sup> A previously quoted comment illustrates the effect this emotionalism had on the Xhosa:

An opinion prevails that religion is calculated to render the Caffre less manly. And hence, some of the chiefs will tell us that it is well enough for the old women and children, but too childish a thing for them to think about.<sup>129</sup>

The fervency of the converts was as a result subject to 'scorn and derision'<sup>130</sup> and regarded as 'proof of weakness and imbecility of mind.'<sup>131</sup>

The Xhosa who resisted the Gospel could not relate to these changes in thought and action. On numerous occasions, converts expressed the opinion that their souls

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<sup>125</sup>W.M.S., 4 September 1826 Kay journal extract, 29 September 1826.

<sup>126</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 25 April 1831.

<sup>127</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 2 August 1829.

<sup>128</sup>Young, Missionary Narrative, p. 36.; Ayliff Journal, 15 May 1831; W.M.S., Kay to Secretaries, March 1827: 'should they perceive anyone affected during Divine Service, considerable uneasiness and alarm is portrayed on their very countenances immediately.'

<sup>129</sup>W.M.S., Kay to Secretaries, March 1827; cf. Kay, Travels, p. 192: 'Tears are regarded as the proof of an imbecile and unmanly spirit.'

<sup>130</sup>W.M.S., Kay to Secretaries, March 1827.

<sup>131</sup>W.M.S., Kay to Secretaries, 14 March 1830.

were more important than cattle and other material possessions.<sup>132</sup> One man was chased to the station, where he was accused of insanity:

'...he is mad, when at home he does nothing else but talk about God, and Sin, and the people about say this is thro [sic] his coming to the School.'<sup>133</sup>

Converts donned European clothing and renounced their names<sup>134</sup> and many customs classified as 'sinful', such as dancing. One believer was told:

'A few months ago you were one of our great dancers, and was [sic] confirming us in all our old customs; and do you now set about teaching us the new religion, what is come to you?'<sup>135</sup>

Celebrations were held according to English customs, not African: when some couples were married in a Christian manner, 'to their credit...no feasting nor confusion followed'.<sup>136</sup> The changes in behaviour were constantly apparent: society members would sometimes pray all night for their chieftom and sing and pray before dawn.<sup>137</sup> This singular conduct set the converts apart from their community and reinforced Xhosa doubts regarding their mental stability.

In summing up the perceived consequences of conversion or station residence, it is notable that most of the objections displayed by the Xhosa related to the

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<sup>132</sup>Young, *Missionary Narrative*, pp. 38-39; W.M.S., 5 September 1826 Kay journal extract, 29 September 1826; *ibid.*, Shaw to Secretaries, 27 February 1825: '...what have I to do with beads and cattle. My heart has forsaken them. I think of God.'

<sup>133</sup>Ayliff Journal, 16 April 1833. Ayliff conceded that the man 'certainly did talk strange'.

<sup>134</sup>They were often given the names of famous Wesleyans, such as Joseph Butterworth, George Marsden, and Richard Watson.

<sup>135</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 7 January 1829.

<sup>136</sup>Kay reports that they 'sang and prayed' instead: W.M.S., 23 August 1830 Kay journal extract, August 1830.

<sup>137</sup>W.M.S., 31 December 1829 Young journal extract, 5 January 1830; *ibid.*, 23 April 1830 Kay journal extract, 28 April 1830.

individualism shown by the converts.<sup>138</sup> An individual decision was put before people who, in their traditional morality, put the welfare of the group first.<sup>139</sup> Converts were removed from the intricate kinship system, reneging on some of their community obligations. The mission station culture with which they came to identify was alien to Africa with its capitalist organization and European lifestyle. Unusual behaviour was displayed by the new Christians: emotions were freely expressed and less importance was placed on cattle - the mainstay of the Xhosa social and economic system and special objects of affection.<sup>140</sup> These factors were responsible for much of the resistance shown to the Gospel in Xhosa society and built a poor foundation for the future, for an ever-widening gulf developed in Xhosa society between 'Red' and 'School' people which continues to this day.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>138</sup>Cetshwayo objected to the individualism bred by mission stations, stating, 'They only live for their own success': Simensen, 'Religious Change', p. 92; cf. Etherington, Preachers, p. 81.

<sup>139</sup>Wilson, Transformation, p. 122.

<sup>140</sup>Kropf reports that the Xhosa would mourn over the death of a favourite ox as they would for a person: Xosa-Kaffern, p. 108.

<sup>141</sup>Pauw, Christianity and Xhosa Tradition, p. 4; cf. Jordan, African Literature, pp. 54-55.

## 6: CONCLUSIONS

### Response to Christianity: A Theory of Conversion

As the preceding pages have indicated, response to the Gospel among the Xhosa during the initial period of evangelization was minimal. Notwithstanding the continued, concerted resistance of the Xhosa to Christianity that this reveals despite the reduction of their military and political power and economic self-sufficiency, an explanation must be found for the more positive response to the Gospel exhibited by some Africans.

The Mfengu appear to have migrated into Xhosaland in the early to mid-1820's, with large numbers settling around Butterworth.<sup>1</sup> By 1827 William Shaw was noting a number of villages around the future station of Butterworth which consisted of 'Africans of several distinct nations' called 'Amafengoo' who sought and received refuge under Hintsa from 'wars and commotions in the interior'.<sup>2</sup> Shrewsbury predicted, along with Shaw, that 'a people so humbled and depressed by war and its attendant calamities will probably receive the gospel of Christ with gladness of heart'.<sup>3</sup> Stephen Kay echoed these sentiments in 1830, the text of which is quoted at length:

Three of the persons (one man, and two women) baptized on this occasion belong to the class of people already mentioned, and to whom the Caffres have given the name of Amafingu - because poor: and poor indeed they are; for excepting those who have become resident on the Mission Stations, few, or any of them can command any kind of property that can

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<sup>1</sup>The standard explanation for the origin of the Mfengu is that they were northern Nguni set in flight by the Mfecane: Moyer, 'Mfengu', pp. 72, 75. This theory is currently being questioned by A.C. Webster: 'Land Expropriation and Labour Extraction under Cape Colonial Rule: The War of 1835 and the "Emancipation" of the Fingo' (Rhodes University, M.A. thesis, 1991), Chapter 4.

<sup>2</sup>Wesleyan Reports (1827), Shaw letter, 29 June 1827, p. 42.

<sup>3</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 10 December 1826. Shrewsbury estimated the number of Mfengu around Butterworth at five to six thousand people: Wesleyan Reports (1827), 12 July 1827 Shrewsbury journal extract, p. 45. As he gives no basis for this estimate, it is difficult to evaluate his appraisal; nevertheless, both he and Shaw were impressed by the numbers of people involved.

be called their own. Most of them are the complete vassals of those who may entertain them; and to this state of servile subjection they submit, for the sake of mere subsistence. They are, in short, strangers in a strange country, having for years been beaten about by the enemy, and the perpetual wars of the interior....That unprecedented numbers of these destitute exiles should have been literally driven into this quarter, by a train of uncontrollable occurrences, at the very time when Christianity was becoming established in the land, and when the Gospel was pushing its way onward, as if to meet them; that a strange variety of circumstances should have tended to scatter such numerous groups of them around our respective stations, and that increasing numbers are now to be found amongst the inhabitants of every Mission village in Caffraria, are facts of the most pleasing kind...They are not merely thrown within the range of Missionary operation; but, by a distinguished and remarkable readiness both to hear and to receive the Gospel, they are obviously becoming special objects of Missionary attention...Our stations are evidently becoming their asylums; and I verily believe, that the period is not far distant when many of them will be added unto the church of our God.<sup>4</sup>

Wesleyan predictions appeared to hold true regarding Mfengu willingness to accept the Gospel. By the 1830's, several Mfengu had been baptized at Wesleyville,<sup>5</sup> Mfengu were reported to be attending services<sup>6</sup> and interested in the Gospel at Butterworth,<sup>7</sup> and an Mfengu woman had been baptized at Mount Coke.<sup>8</sup> Ayliff reported in 1835 that 'the influence of the Gospel was spreading in the tribe, particularly among the Fingoes'<sup>9</sup> and the Butterworth report for 1834 indicates that one-half of the hearers at the services were Mfengu.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Missionary Notices 187 (1831), 8 August 1830 Kay journal extract, pp. 482-483.

<sup>5</sup>Wesleyan Reports (1830), Wesleyville Report for 1829, p. 45.

<sup>6</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 29 October 1827.

<sup>7</sup>W.M.S., 4 May 1830 Kay journal extract, 31 May 1830; Ayliff Journal, 11 July 1834. Ayliff reports that four men and 1 woman joined the catechumen class who were 'driven from [their] country by Chaka'. The first Mfengu to become a Christian was from Butterworth: W.M.S., 25 December 1829 Shrewsbury journal extract, 31 December 1829.

<sup>8</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 24 April 1831.

<sup>9</sup>Missionary Notices 240 (1835), Ayliff letter, 12 June 1835, p. 179. Sir Benjamin D'Urban similarly noted the willingness of the Mfengu to hear the Gospel: W.M.S., D'Urban to Earl of Aberdeen, 19 June 1835 (Copy of Despatch).

<sup>10</sup>Wesleyan Reports (1835), Butterworth report for 1834, p. 43.

What were the reasons for the attraction of the Mfengu to the mission stations? As Kay indicated, the Mfengu were not in a strong economic position when they filtered into Xhosaland.<sup>11</sup> They became part of the Xhosa system of *busa* clientship whereby a man with no cattle could borrow some from a richer individual. The *busa* client, who lived off the milk products and received calves in return for taking care of the cattle, resumed his independence once he had accumulated enough stock.<sup>12</sup> Seeking to improve their position as clients in Xhosa society, the Mfengu quickly acquired goods and cattle through the trade and cultivation of tobacco<sup>13</sup> which may have excited Xhosa envy due to the increased and presumably unshared wealth.<sup>14</sup> In addition, they resisted *upundlo* and the paying of tribute.<sup>15</sup>

It is unlikely that the Mfengu were indeed 'slaves' in need of 'emancipation' as claimed by Ayliff and Whiteside.<sup>16</sup> According to Moyer, the Mfengu were not satisfied with the pace at which their incorporation into Xhosa society was taking place and associated with white society in the hope of merging with the white community as

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<sup>11</sup>Cf. Ayliff Journal, 5 December 1834. Rose, writing in 1829, called a man whose goods had been confiscated 'little better than a Fingo (a wanderer)': Four Years, p. 195.

<sup>12</sup>Peires, 'Chiefs and Commoners', p. 135; Moyer, 'Mfengu', pp. 120-121.

<sup>13</sup>Peires, House of Phalo, p. 88; cf. Ayliff and Whiteside, Abambo, p. 25; Theal, History, Vol. 4, p. 26; Moyer, 'Mfengu', pp. 124-126.

<sup>14</sup>There are numerous reports from this time period of witchcraft accusations against the Mfengu: Shrewsbury Journal, 16 December 1826; Ayliff Journal, 15 August 1832; W.M.S., 20 December 1829 Shrewsbury journal extract, 31 December 1829. The Mfengu were probably not accused more often than the Gcaleka, however their accusations gained more publicity because they complained to the missionaries: Moyer, 'Mfengu', p. 134.

<sup>15</sup>Peires, House of Phalo, p. 88.

<sup>16</sup>Ayliff & Whiteside, History of the Abambo, generally known as Fingos (Butterworth, 1912). J.H. Soga and Moyer dispute this allegation: Moyer, 'Mfengu', p. 11; J.H. Soga, The South-eastern Bantu (Johannesburg, 1930), pp. 180-186. Certainly the fact that by 1839 most diviners among the Xhosa were Mfengu speaks against wholesale oppression: Backhouse, Narrative, 19 February 1839 journal extract, p. 231; Moyer, 'Mfengu', p. 131.

equals.<sup>17</sup> To accelerate this assimilation, the Mfengu attended mission schools<sup>18</sup> and affiliated with the missionaries, who willingly offered to be 'friends to the oppressed'.<sup>19</sup> The Mfengu did not harbour the antagonism toward the whites that the Xhosa had developed in response to previous armed conflicts or loss of land.<sup>20</sup> So close was Mfengu-white association that during the War of 1834-35, the Mfengu helped the colony by gathering intelligence and relaying messages.<sup>21</sup> Because they were amenable to associating with the Western missionaries and government as vehicles of protest,<sup>22</sup> the Mfengu were open to change and quickly adapted to Western culture<sup>23</sup> and, after prolonged exposure to the Gospel, converted in large numbers after 1857.

The standard explanation for Mfengu conversion originated in the circumstance that the Mfengu were 'rootless'<sup>24</sup> and broken by war and starvation:<sup>25</sup> they supposedly accepted the Gospel because of their shattered world-view and insecurity of life.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Moyer, 'Mfengu', p. 11.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>19</sup>Ayliff Journal, 3 September 1834.

<sup>20</sup>Moyer, 'Mfengu', p. 116.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., pp. 152-153.

<sup>22</sup>According to Shorter, when religion serves as a vehicle of protest for an immigrant community, it becomes irrelevant for the community at large: African Culture, p. 78. This may have been an aggravating factor in Xhosa resistance to the Gospel around Butterworth, for Ayliff reported that some Gcaleka 'pay but little if any attention to the preaching of the Gospel but seem to think that this belongs to the poor oppressed Fingoo': Ayliff Journal, 30 July 1834; cf. Ayliff and Whiteside, History of the Abambo, p. 20.

<sup>23</sup>Pauw, Christianity and Xhosa Tradition, p. 22; Soga, Ama-Xosa, p. 129.

<sup>24</sup>Janet Hodgson, 'Soga and Dukwana: the Christian Struggle for Liberation in Mid Nineteenth Century South Africa', Journal of Religion in Africa 16 (3) 1986, p. 198.

<sup>25</sup>Ayliff & Whiteside, History of the Abambo, p. 15.

<sup>26</sup>Hodgson, God of the Xhosa, p. 11; Williams, 'Missionaries', p. 267; Etherington, Preachers, p. 90; Cope, 'Christian Missions', pp. 15, 19; Elphick, 'Africans and the Christian Campaign', p. 273.

Hence it has been hypothesized that the refugees had nothing to lose by moving to the mission stations as did members of stable, self-sufficient societies.<sup>27</sup>

This view overlooks the crucial point that becoming resident or living near the station did not imply conversion. Rather than viewing the 'positive' response of the Mfengu, it is important to note that given the numbers of Mfengu that gathered near the stations, relatively few were converted. Of the 1,000 Mfengu settled at D'Urban<sup>28</sup> by 1839, for example, only 15 were members of the church.<sup>29</sup> Even if Shrewsbury's estimate of five to six thousand Mfengu around Butterworth is significantly downscaled, it is still a matter of some surprise that by 1834 there were only 22 Society members at Butterworth, most of whom were not Mfengu. Shrewsbury even recorded two cases where Mfengu were resolutely opposed to the Gospel.<sup>30</sup>

The same applies to other ethnic groups, most of whom sought the land or security provided by the stations. It would seem that in the initial period, the Khoikhoi coming to the stations were seeking land, for they were experiencing considerable land pressure in the colony;<sup>31</sup> the Xhosa were attracted for reasons of security<sup>32</sup> (as in the case of fleeing a witchcraft accusation), as land was not as scarce as it was to be in later years. Hence missions commenced with a station population,<sup>33</sup> albeit chiefly a pagan

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<sup>27</sup>Simensen, 'Religious Change as Transaction', pp. 83, 90.

<sup>28</sup>D'Urban was close to present-day Peddie in the Eastern Cape.

<sup>29</sup>Backhouse, *Narrative*, 28 & 29 March 1839 journal extracts, p. 287.

<sup>30</sup>W.M.S., 25 December 1829 Shrewsbury journal extract, 31 December 1829; Shrewsbury Journal, 13 September 1829.

<sup>31</sup>This is supported by Shrewsbury's record that six families arrived on the station in 1827 to cultivate land: Shrewsbury Journal, 19 November 1827. That they were probably Khoikhoi is indicated by their search for land and their monogamous lifestyle.

<sup>32</sup>Shrewsbury noted that most converts were 'for the greater part poor and men of little or no outward influence': W.M.S., Shrewsbury to Secretaries, 30 June 1830.

<sup>33</sup>At the establishment of Butterworth, Shrewsbury reported that members were already 'united in class': *Wesleyan Reports* (1828), Butterworth report for 1827, p. 62.

one. At Mount Coke, it was reported that 'a settled population of about 90 reside on the station' and yet the number of Society members was given as seven.<sup>34</sup> Among the Thembu at Clarkebury, 100 families were living on the station which contrasted with only 35 Society members<sup>35</sup> and at Wesleyville, there were 30 believers as compared to 300 mission village residents.<sup>36</sup> This pattern is consistent at Xhosaland stations yet has been given little scholarly attention. It indicates that many people were attracted to the stations out of self-interest and consistently resisted attempts to convert them.

This point has been overlooked by historians due to the strict code of conduct to which station residents were expected to conform. Polygamy was forbidden, and there are records of marriages performed by the missionaries to enable people to live on the station.<sup>37</sup> Nudity was likewise prohibited and could result in expulsion,<sup>38</sup> and at Butterworth it was decided by the station residents that anyone who did not cultivate land could not live on the station.<sup>39</sup> When 26 people arrived at Butterworth to take up residence in 1831, Ayliff described the task before him:

with these new comers we have of course something to do, to get them acquainted with the order and discipline of the station, it being so different to what they have been accustomed to.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Wesleyan Reports (1835), Mount Coke report for 1834, pp. xx, 43.

<sup>35</sup>Backhouse, Narrative, p. 257.

<sup>36</sup>Shaw, My Mission, p. 393.

<sup>37</sup>In 1831, Ayliff reported that 13 adults and 13 children had come to reside at the station; soon after, four couples were married: W.M.S., Ayliff to Secretaries, 28 May 1831; cf. Shrewsbury Journal, 4 May 1828 (1 couple), 11 September 1828 (3 couples), 14 December 1828 (2 couples), 22 March 1829 (3 couples); W.M.S., 23 August 1830 Kay journal extract, August 1830. The marriage of a couple did not imply that they had converted, for the number of society members did not reflect the number of marriages performed.

<sup>38</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 21 January 1831.

<sup>39</sup>Ayliff Journal, 16 October 1830.

<sup>40</sup>Missionary Notices 193 (1832), Ayliff letter, 28 May 1831, p. 7.

In order to remain on the station, then, certain conduct was obligatory,<sup>41</sup> giving the erroneous impression to outsiders that station residents had accepted the Gospel.

The procedure for becoming a Society member went beyond the prescribed station conduct and involved a genuine interest in the Gospel. One station resident noted that he did not experience the same religious feelings as other residents: 'I wish I could feel the word in my heart. Others feel it but I cannot feel.'<sup>42</sup> To identify those who 'felt the word', a specific policy was followed:

When any persons on the station manifest a serious deportment, and, from their regular attendance upon the means of grace, we have reason to believe that they desire to save their souls, they are invited to this class [of catechumens], which they must attend weekly, when they are advised or reproved as occasion may require...After a person has been a consistent member for three, six, or nine months, according to the progress he makes, he is baptized, and admitted into society.<sup>43</sup>

As the Methodist records show, few met these qualifications during the initial period of evangelization.<sup>44</sup>

From the above information a consistent scenario emerges. Africans were attracted to the stations for a variety of reasons pertaining to their self-interest.<sup>45</sup> Because they willingly associated with the missionaries to obtain land or security, they were open to accepting an outward change in lifestyle. The political situation in Xhosaland therefore greatly influenced the religious landscape, for where there was

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<sup>41</sup>Hutchinson, 'Missionary Activity', p. 164.

<sup>42</sup>Ayliff Journal, 17 October 1830.

<sup>43</sup>Missionary Notices 224 (1834), 29 March 1833 Ayliff Journal Extract, p. 522; cf. Instructions, VII (4).

<sup>44</sup>It is possible that some Africans may have believed in Christianity but were not accepted as Society members due to the rigorous standards set by the missionaries. For example, Soga at Tyhume was a believer but did not accept missionary authority concerning polygamy: Hodgson, 'Soga and Dukwana', p. 190.

<sup>45</sup>The same pattern holds true for Nigeria, where missions attracted those with a desire to appropriate all the material and social opportunities the missionary enterprise afforded: Ayandele, Nigeria, pp. xvii, 343-344.

conflict with whites, Africans resisted 'things European' generally, did not expose themselves to the white man's message, and were not converted.<sup>46</sup> The missionaries represented a refuge to groups such as the Mfengu and Khoikhoi and opposition to the Xhosa at large, thus explaining their differing responses.

After these people had been exposed to the Western lifestyle and way of thinking over a period of time, Western concepts became more familiar to them and even more so to their children. Because Christianity was presented primarily in terms of Western culture, the Gospel was most understandable to those who had become westernized and individualistic.<sup>47</sup> It was for this reason that the 'civilization' of Africans was necessary for missionary success, as Moodie noted:

From all I have observed of the Hottentots and Kaffres, it appears to me that they can only be converted through the medium of civilization; for it seems quite impossible to make them comprehend the doctrines of the Christian religion, or to give due weight to the evidence on which it is founded, without previous education...<sup>48</sup>

Some of them, after prolonged association with and exposure to the missionary message, were eventually converted.<sup>49</sup>

This conforms with sociological evidence which shows that individuals are much less likely to experience religious conversion when there has been a total absence of

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<sup>46</sup>Pauw noted this pattern: where African-white conflicts existed, there was in general resistance to Christianity; where no such conflicts were, acceptance was fostered: 'Patterns of Christianization', pp. 249-250, 253; cf. Wauchope, Missionaries, p. 3; Soga, South-eastern Bantu, p. 208.

<sup>47</sup>Individualism may already have been hastened among those associating with the whites: the Mfengu had experienced considerable breakdown of their social structure due to war and starvation, causing community and homestead bonds to be weakened. See Moyer, 'Mfengu', p. 480 for a description of how the acquisitive characteristics of the Mfengu made it easier for them to adapt to missionary Christianity.

<sup>48</sup>Moodie, Ten Years, vol. 2, p. 283.

<sup>49</sup>Conversion was probably also facilitated because long-term residents did not have to contend with the opposition they would have faced outside the station from relatives.

previous religious education and/or experience.<sup>50</sup> Many of the converts on the stations, for example, were of Khoikhoi descent and had had considerable exposure to Western culture and Christianity.<sup>51</sup> Among Xhosa speakers, Christianity began to make inroads as a result of the Cattle-Killing of 1857, when 80% of the Xhosa were left dead or homeless due to the lack of food.<sup>52</sup> A close examination of the thousands of people who became converted within nine years of the catastrophe<sup>53</sup> reveals that this growth was limited principally to the Mfengu segment of the population.<sup>54</sup> Hence the pattern emerges: some Africans were attracted to the stations for reasons of self-interest, exposed to Western culture and Christianity over a period of time, and then some of them were converted.<sup>55</sup>

This is supported by the more positive response to the Gospel shown by station residents, most of whom were not Society members. The station people showed the most affection for the missionaries<sup>56</sup> who were, after all, their *de facto* chiefs. Ayliff commented that the efforts he expended on the station were far more profitable than

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<sup>50</sup>Shorter, African Culture, p. 76.

<sup>51</sup>Wilson & Thompson, Oxford History, vol. 1, p. 67ff.

<sup>52</sup>J.B. Peires, "'Soft' Believers and 'Hard' Unbelievers in the Xhosa Cattle-Killing", Journal of African History 27 (1986), p. 445.

<sup>53</sup>G.B.A. Gerdener, The Story of Christian Missions in South Africa (Johannesburg, 1950), p. 17.

<sup>54</sup>Pauw, Christianity and Xhosa Tradition, p. 25.

<sup>55</sup>There were exceptions to this pattern, but it is difficult to ascertain the reasons for specific conversions as the case histories of converts were not always recorded. That these were not only material reasons is illustrated by the circumstance that many of Ntsikana's converts were from the upper echelons of society - Soga being the most prominent example - and that numbers of important personages were also converted in Natal: Hodgson, 'Soga and Dukwana', p. 188; Backhouse, Narrative, 6 February 1839 journal extract, p. 211; Etherington, Preachers, p. 89.

<sup>56</sup>Ayliff Journal, 9 June 1831.

those spent outside the station<sup>57</sup> while Shrewsbury noted that those who were 'penitent for sin' lived on the station.<sup>58</sup> The difference between these two groups was highlighted during services: station people heard with 'marked attention' while those from outside displayed marked indifference, 'sleeping with their Corross over their heads...gazing about on an [sic] trifling object that presented itself to their view'.<sup>59</sup>

Robin Horton has hypothesized that the conversion of Africans to Christianity or Islam was due as much to the development of their traditional cosmology in response to social and economic change as it was to the activities of the missionaries.<sup>60</sup> This is based upon the assumption that if a society is stable and unchanging, there is no need for religious change.<sup>61</sup> It has been shown that the Xhosa had various spiritual and material needs which required fulfilment;<sup>62</sup> had it not been for the Western form in which Christianity was presented to the self-sufficient Xhosa at this time, it is likely that many more Africans would have embraced the Gospel. As it was, those who converted came primarily from a background of consistent and lengthy exposure to Western culture and Christianity.

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<sup>57</sup>Ayliff Journal, 31 May 1832.

<sup>58</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 7 December 1828.

<sup>59</sup>Ayliff Journal, 17 October & 7 November 1830.

<sup>60</sup>Robin Horton, 'African Conversion', *Africa* 2 (1971), p. 103.

<sup>61</sup>Cf. Moyer, 'Mfengu', p. 512.

<sup>62</sup>Cf. Gray, *Black Christians and White Missionaries*, pp. 83-84.

### General Conclusions

By 1834, the failure of missionary labours among the Xhosa was apparent. The Scottish and London missionaries admitted that the results in terms of converts were poor<sup>63</sup> and Wesleyan disillusionment similarly deepened, with Shrewsbury commenting that 'nothing next to the Gospel will so much benefit them as subjection, in common with the Colonists, to our Government and Laws'.<sup>64</sup> Lack of success was not imputed to missionary tactics but to Xhosa character. Stephen Kay ascribed it to their 'ignorance and manifest hardness [which] often constrain the Missionary to weep in secret places',<sup>65</sup> while van Calker blamed it on 'die viele Kriegesjahre...und daß der Kaffer ein hartes Herz hat, das nicht so leicht unter dem Hammer des Wortes zerbricht'.<sup>66</sup>

Nor were the years that followed any more promising, with missionary failure reaching a climax in the early 1850's.<sup>67</sup> The Wesleyan missionary historian Joseph Whiteside summed up missionary labours after 1835:

Of the labours of the missionaries from 1835 to 1852 little is recorded...They were depressed by the recent war, and either there was little to report or they did not care to place on paper the details of their

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<sup>63</sup>Williams, 'Missionaries', pp. 353, 358-359. The initial period of evangelization rarely had much success in other parts of the world; in East Africa, there were only six converts after the first 20 years of labour: Roland Oliver, The Missionary Factor in East Africa (London, 1952), p. 6.

<sup>64</sup>W.M.S., Shrewsbury to Secretaries, 24 December 1835. Hardships, Xhosa rejection of the Gospel, and the frontier wars led many Xhosaland missionaries to support the extension of British rule after 1834 to destroy native customs and open the door for Christianity: Williams, 'Missionaries', pp. 170-177. A similar missionary view prevailed in Natal, where one missionary said, 'it looks as if this people only through material and political humiliation can be brought to their knees and taught to seek something higher': Simensen, 'Religious Change', p. 87; cf. Etherington, Preachers, p. 45.

<sup>65</sup>Kay, Travels, 4 July 1830 journal extract, p. 301.

<sup>66</sup>i.e. 'the many years of war...and because the Kaffer has a hard heart which is not easily broken under the hammer of the Word' (author's trans.): van Calker, Hundert Jahre, p. 33.

<sup>67</sup>Williams, 'Missionaries', pp. iii, 30.

weary toil. They changed from station to station, rarely staying more than two years, often only one, seeking the relief of change...But the brightness and hope of early Mission work had vanished...<sup>68</sup>

The L.M.S. missionary Henry Calderwood wrote in 1858 that if he viewed 'the Caffres as a nation, they may be said to have refused the Gospel'.<sup>69</sup> Even up to the present day, Christianity has in many parts never made a real breakthrough to the Xhosa, the Thembu, or the Mpondo.<sup>70</sup>

An investigation of missionary efforts in West and East Africa can shed further light on African perceptions of and response to the Gospel. Although the situation in West Africa differed markedly from that further south, as shown by the presence of Islam and the slave trade, there were many parallels in missionary experience.

The work done by the Roman Catholic missionaries in West Africa from 1445-1790 resulted in few conversions, with the Protestants faring no better after their arrival in 1790.<sup>71</sup> Among the reasons for this were the high missionary mortality rate, the unclear distinction between European and Christian aims, lack of missionary knowledge about the local language, customs and culture and the resulting strident condemnation of the indigenous way of life.<sup>72</sup> West African religion was an affirmation of social cohesion and solidarity, resulting in profound political and social consequences when religious allegiance changed<sup>73</sup> - consequences analogous to those faced by the Xhosa.

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<sup>68</sup>Whiteside, Methodist Church, pp. 209-210.

<sup>69</sup>Calderwood, Caffres and Caffre Missions, p. 96.

<sup>70</sup>Pauw, Christianity and Xhosa Tradition, p. 25.

<sup>71</sup>Peter B. Clarke, West Africa and Christianity (London, 1986), pp. 25, 44-45.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., pp. 44-45.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., pp. 11-12. Sidney Rooy found that the rejection of the traditional way of life also hindered the conversion of North American Indians in seventeenth century New England: Theology of Missions in the Puritan Tradition (Delft, 1965), cited in Warren, Social History, pp. 82-83.

In summing up the unenthusiastic response of West Africans, Clarke's evaluation bears a striking resemblance to the situation found in Xhosaland:

[Christianity] demanded a radical break with custom and tradition while the advantages of such a break were by no means obvious to many West Africans.<sup>74</sup>

Clarke points to the inflexibility of Western missionaries in transplanting their faith to a new setting as the grounds for this perception:

The Christian missionary of the nineteenth century was not on the whole prepared for the alternative ways of thinking about and practicing the faith if these appeared to conflict with the form and content of the Christian tradition of which he or she was the bearer.<sup>75</sup>

It would seem that Asian culture and history differ so markedly from that of Africa that few similarities could be expected. However, the missionaries sent to China had the same evangelical roots<sup>76</sup> and were also faced with a culture fundamentally different from their own. Response in China was also minimal during the pioneer stage: after the China Inland Mission had been operating in China for 20 years, there was only an average of 16 converts per station.<sup>77</sup> Ten years later the situation was little better, with the mission recording 641 missionaries and 5211 'communicants' (church members).<sup>78</sup>

Chinese beliefs were similar to those of Africa in that they were this-worldly, Chinese divinity was not direct and interventionist, and there was no belief in the duality

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<sup>74</sup>Clarke, West Africa, p. 26.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., p. 82.

<sup>76</sup>Warren, Social History, p. 154.

<sup>77</sup>China Mission Handbook, vol. 2 (Shanghai, 1896), p. 114.

<sup>78</sup>D. MacGillivray, ed., A Century of Protestant Missions in China, 1807-1907 (Shanghai: 1907), p. 163.

of body and spirit.<sup>79</sup> The missionary approach to Chinese beliefs was analogous to that of Africa: Buddhism was little understood and viewed as a collection of superstitions.<sup>80</sup> The evangelists therefore attacked the ancestor cult as in Africa, which undermined the concept of filial piety and therewith the socio-political order.<sup>81</sup> In addition to this disruption, many Chinese identified Christianity with the West and its gunboat diplomacy<sup>82</sup> and believed the missionaries planned to overthrow the government.<sup>83</sup> However, this correlation was not inevitable, as the scholar Andre Chih pointed out:

if the Christian religion had accepted all the elements of Chinese culture (and it could without harm to its dogma), the Chinese would have had no reason to regard this religion as a foreign instrument serving imperialism.<sup>84</sup>

Hence the association between the missionaries and the West was strengthened by the missionary attack on Chinese culture.

It is easy to pass harsh judgment on the missionaries if a realization of the immense task before them is not kept in mind. In such an unfamiliar culture, Christian concepts such as 'justification' were extremely difficult to convey,<sup>85</sup> and after years among the Xhosa, Shrewsbury had to confess that he was

ofttimes at a loss to know what to say to the ignorant, or how to convey distinct and clear ideas of the great truths of Christianity to his heart.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>79</sup>Jacques Gernet, China and the Christian Impact (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 165, 193, 198.

<sup>80</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 208.

<sup>81</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 105, 168, 182.

<sup>82</sup>Jessie Lutz, ed., Christian Missions in China: Evangelists of What? (Boston, 1965), p. xix.

<sup>83</sup>Gernet, China, p. 132.

<sup>84</sup>Lutz, ed., Christian Missions in China, p. xix.

<sup>85</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 27 February 1831.

<sup>86</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 25 May 1830; cf. W.M.S., 30 January 1825 Shaw journal extract, April 1825.

To acquire a deep knowledge and understanding of any culture requires willingness, perseverance, and insight. Historians have the benefit of historical and contemporary ethnographic accounts whereas the first evangelists had little knowledge of the cultures they set about changing.<sup>87</sup> The euphonic concord, the 'key' to learning Xhosa, was discovered only in 1832/33, further hindering the acquisition of cultural knowledge. Kay noted that before going to Africa, little material of value was available on the land and people,<sup>88</sup> forcing the Wesleyans to rely on the sparse and biased information provided by the settlers and colonial authorities. The Wesleyans had access to van der Kemp's journal extracts in the L.M.S. Transactions published in 1803 - they frequently commented on his labours and research; whether they were familiar with Lichtenstein's work and other travellers' records is uncertain. Even so, the underlying African belief system is not articulated in these sources. Anthropology was a twentieth-century development and the serious comparative study of religions was attempted only in the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>89</sup>

The Wesleyans were at times creative in their presentation of the message, as when Shrewsbury likened the eating of the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden with a poor man who is loaned cattle but is told not to drink the milk of one of the cows.<sup>90</sup> The missionaries also adapted by keeping their sermons brief, as with Shrewsbury's ten-minute messages.<sup>91</sup> However, on a broader level missionaries in Africa were not able

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<sup>87</sup>Ilogu, Ibo Culture, p. 86.

<sup>88</sup>Kay, Travels, pp. iv-v. Upon his return to England, Kay made good use of the travellers' records then available to him: *ibid.*, p. 395.

<sup>89</sup>Warren, Social History, p. 64.

<sup>90</sup>Shrewsbury Journal, 2 September 1830; cf. *ibid.*, 4-10 October 1829.

<sup>91</sup>Missionary Notices 154 (1828), Shrewsbury letter, 31 March 1828, p. 537.

to undress Christianity of their European values and dress it in African culture.<sup>92</sup> The lack of emphasis that Wesleyans placed on training African converts as evangelists<sup>93</sup> underscores their failure to appreciate that a thorough knowledge of African culture was necessary for effective transmission of the Gospel.<sup>94</sup>

The sixteen-month sojourn of van der Kemp among the Ngqika provides an interesting contrast to the Wesleyan approach. Although he had some knowledge of the Xhosa language,<sup>95</sup> he laboured under misconceptions regarding African divinity and the distinction between witches and diviners.<sup>96</sup> Despite sharing this deficiency with Wesleyans, the physician's lifestyle and message were strikingly different from theirs. He did not portray African character and culture as inferior, remarking that African beliefs 'shew that credulity and unbelief go hand in hand, as well in Caffraria as in Europe'.<sup>97</sup> He commented that the Xhosa 'danced as crazy people'<sup>98</sup> but did not condemn this dancing as sinful.

His message was also different, for he preached a this-worldly message, a Gospel not wedded to Western culture. He told Ngqika that he wished to instruct his people 'in matters which could make them happy in this life, and after death'.<sup>99</sup> He introduced

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<sup>92</sup>Shorter, African Culture, p. 69.

<sup>93</sup>Cragg, 'Amampondo', p. 30. Shaw stated that 'the employment of Native Teachers in the proposed Branch Schools is highly desirable for many reasons, but especially because they would require very small salaries': W.M.S., February 1833 Albany District Meeting, William Shaw recommendations.

<sup>94</sup>This may also have been due to the lack of trust that the missionaries displayed in their converts, who had only recently emerged from their 'savage state'.

<sup>95</sup>Van der Kemp provides a brief description of Xhosa grammar and vocabulary in Transactions, pp. 450-458.

<sup>96</sup>Van der Kemp, Transactions, p. 432.

<sup>97</sup>Ibid., p. 434.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid., p. 397.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid., p. 395.

the Gospel in a conversational manner<sup>100</sup> and stressed the this-worldly attributes of Christianity, such as the desire of God to provide in time of need, be it in the form of rain or food.<sup>101</sup> He lived as the Xhosa did<sup>102</sup> and fostered social contacts, using chemical experiments to entertain his visitors,<sup>103</sup> and there are two references to Ngqika visiting the missionary and playing with his students in van der Kemp's hut.<sup>104</sup>

Van der Kemp's brief stay resulted in only one Khoikhoi convert<sup>105</sup> and his scholars came from the ethnic backgrounds<sup>106</sup> that became characteristic of future mission stations. Nonetheless, his short stay makes an evaluation of his efforts in terms of conversions impossible. It is certain, however, that he made a long-lasting impression upon the Xhosa. When Henry Calderwood began his mission among the Ngqika many years later, he encountered people who still had 'some warm and salutary recollections of him. Several of the old Caffres often referred to him with evident interest and respect.'<sup>107</sup> Despite Ngqika's initial suspicions as to the missionary's purpose, his confidence in van der Kemp was attested to many years later by Ngqika's son Maqoma.<sup>108</sup>

It is ironic that the criticisms levelled at the missionary who best adapted

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<sup>100</sup>Wauchope, Missionaries, p. 20.

<sup>101</sup>Van der Kemp, Transactions, pp. 418-420.

<sup>102</sup>Hewson, ed., Missionary Institutions, Series 2, p. 66.

<sup>103</sup>Van der Kemp, Transactions, 18 January 1800 Journal Extract, p. 413.

<sup>104</sup>*Ibid.*, 25 December 1799 and 23 & 25 April 1800 Journal Extracts, pp. 410-411, 416.

<sup>105</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 430.

<sup>106</sup>The students are described as 'five Heathen women, one Hottentot boy and one girl, one Caffre girl, one Tambouchie boy, and seven Bastards': van der Kemp, Transactions, p. 421.

<sup>107</sup>Calderwood, Caffres and Caffre Missions, p. 92.

<sup>108</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 94.

Christianity to its new environment should come from his peers. Whiteside disparaged van der Kemp's attempts to 'place himself on their level [which] aroused suspicion'<sup>109</sup> while du Plessis said he was 'impatient, impractical, confrontational, [and he] disregarded authority'.<sup>110</sup> Shepherd best summed up van der Kemp's character and anomalous position among the Xhosaland missionaries:

...a man of rare courage and disinterestedness...one of the most learned, unselfish, and original men in the Colony of his day...Perhaps he was too original for a land whose heart does not warm to singularity, and was too often a giant among pygmies to be popular or even understood.<sup>111</sup>

Van der Kemp proved to be the forerunner of future adapters. The prophet Ntsikana, who was influenced by van der Kemp, adjusted Christianity to Xhosa culture in meeting Xhosa interpretative and existential needs<sup>112</sup> and bridging the traditional and post-traditional periods.<sup>113</sup> Henry Callaway, a physician and missionary to the Zulu, respected Nguni doctors and diviners, realizing that they provided cures where Western medicine had none.<sup>114</sup> Bishop Colenso also found positive features in Nguni culture, rarely mentioned hell in his sermons and tolerated polygamy.<sup>115</sup> Despite their innovative approaches, Colenso and Callaway were no more successful than their fellow missionaries, presumably because their sermons were still substantially garbed in Western culture.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>109</sup>Whiteside, Methodist Church, p. 169.

<sup>110</sup>Du Plessis, History of Christian Missions, p. 136. The greatest fault held against him was his marriage to a very young slave girl: Wauchope, Missionaries, p. 24.

<sup>111</sup>Shepherd, Where Aloes Flame, p. 87.

<sup>112</sup>Hodgson, 'Soga and Dukwana', p. 187.

<sup>113</sup>Jordan, African Literature (Berkeley, 1973), p. 50.

<sup>114</sup>Etherington, 'Missionary Doctors', pp. 83-85.

<sup>115</sup>Etherington, Preachers, pp. 41-43.

<sup>116</sup>Only an examination of their correspondence can reveal whether the content of their sermons was the same as the Wesleyan message examined here.

The failure of the missionaries to engage with Xhosa culture not only discouraged conversions but also left the missionaries dissatisfied with the spiritual level of their converts.<sup>117</sup> Because Christianity was presented in terms of Western culture, the African and Western worldviews conflicted and caused African Christians to live on two levels, with a primary, overt affiliation with Christianity as well as a secondary, clandestine affiliation with pagan beliefs.<sup>118</sup> The missionaries did not show how Christianity was relevant for all dimensions of life and thus made a reconciliation between other-worldly Western Christianity and this-worldly African culture difficult. This understandably led to problems in morality, ethics, and social practice.<sup>119</sup> The independent 'Ethiopian' churches that sprang up in the 1880's - much to missionary alarm - provided a bridge to the heathen past and showed what the African Christians regarded as important and relevant in Christianity.<sup>120</sup>

It was the overlooking of the African belief system and social structure that spelled the failure of missionary endeavours among the Xhosa during the period 1825-35. Although the missionaries recognized the universality of Christianity, they limited it to their culture and system of thought.<sup>121</sup> As a result, Christ was presented as the answer to questions a white man would ask, as the solution to Western needs.<sup>122</sup> Existing African concepts of divinity were ignored and instead a personal God was presented who appeared to exhibit primarily negative characteristics, such as wrath and

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<sup>117</sup>Tempels, Bantu Philosophy, p. 183.

<sup>118</sup>Staples, 'Ancestors', p. 35.

<sup>119</sup>Setiloane, African Theology, pp. 31, 33.

<sup>120</sup>Bengt Sundkler, Bantu Prophets in South Africa (London, 1961), pp. 17, 297.

<sup>121</sup>Taylor, Primal Vision, p. 5.

<sup>122</sup>Ibid., p. 24.

judgment. The pressing physical needs of this world were neglected and the emphasis placed on an unfamiliar hereafter. Spiritual needs such as fear of witchcraft were dismissed as superstition and never addressed. The call to conversion became synonymous with a call to individualism; the corresponding lifestyle suppressed exuberance and promoted an existence cut off from African society, threatening the social structure and functioning of the community. It was a negative message with an abstract, other-worldly, legalistic orientation. The missionary-African contact of this period can thus be characterized as the encounter between two systems of thought which did not engage.

## APPENDIX

ANALYSIS OF WESLEYAN SERMONS TOPICS AND TEXTS<sup>1</sup>

The following are the sermon texts of the Wesleyans at Mount Coke and Butterworth for the period 1825-35. Most of the Bible texts quoted are lengthy; only the central theme or quotation from the passage is indicated.

N.B. Asterisks (\*) indicate the number of times a text or sermon appears in the correspondence, e.g. Genesis 1\*\* means the text was used three times.

God's natureA. God's closeness to man

Genesis 5:24	'Enoch walked with God'
Psalms 8	'what is man that you are mindful of him...'
Psalms 55:2	'hear me and answer me, my thoughts trouble me'
Psalms 139:1-11	'O Lord, you have searched me and you know me'
Isaiah 30:21*	'Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you saying, "This is the way, walk in it."'
Zachariah 2:10	'For I am coming, and I will live among you'
Matthew 1	Christ's birth
Matthew 1:21-23	angel prophecies Christ's birth
Luke 2:10-11	Jesus' birth
John 1:14	'The Word became flesh and dwelt among us'
Acts 2:17	'I will pour out my Spirit on all people'
Acts 2:39	the promised gift of the Holy Spirit
Galatians 2:20	'I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me'
Book of Hebrews	Shrewsbury translated the Book of Hebrews and covered every verse in his sermons during this time period. The main theme of Hebrews is the nature of Christ in the historical perspective of the Old Testament, e.g. Christ as High Priest (intervenes to God on man's behalf), his power, incarnation, etc.
Revelation 3:20	'I stand at the door and knock. If anyone...opens the door, I will come in'

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<sup>1</sup>This list was compiled from the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society Correspondence of Stephen Kay, John Ayliff, Samuel Young, and William Shrewsbury, the journals of Ayliff and Shrewsbury, and Young's book, A Missionary Narrative, for the period from 1825-35. A disproportionate number of sermon texts come from the journal of Shrewsbury, who was fastidious in recording the Bible passages from which he preached.

**B. God's providence/care for man**

Psalm 5	'Listen to my cry for help...let all who take refuge in you be glad'
Psalm 7	'O Lord my God, I take refuge in you; save and deliver me'
Psalm 27:1-4	'The Lord is my light and my salvation'
Psalm 31:19	'How great is your goodness'
Psalm 34:19	'A righteous man may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all'
Psalm 65:9-13	'You care for the land and water it'
Psalm 116:12*	'How can I repay the Lord for all his goodness to me?'
Psalm 67:5-6	'may all the peoples praise you. Then the land will yield its harvest'
Psalm 84:10-12	'no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless'
Psalm 84:12	'blessed is the man who trusts in you'
Matthew 7:11	'your Father in heaven [will]...give good gifts to those who ask him'
Matthew 21:22	'If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.'
	'the love of God...for Jew and Gentile, bond and free'
Romans 8:32	'will He not also...give us all things?'
Romans 5:5	God's love

**Salvation**

Ezekiel 18:27	'if a wicked man...does what is just and right, he will save his life'
Ezekiel 37:1-10	'I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life'
Mark 16:15-16	'whoever believes will be saved, whoever does not believe will be condemned'
Luke 14:22	salvation available to all
Luke 19:10	'the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost'
II Cor 6:2	'now is the day of salvation'
Ephesians 2:8-9*	'by grace you have been saved through faith'
	'to seek and to save'
	'salvation of the Gospel'
	'wise unto salvation through faith in Christ'
Titus 3:4-7	God's salvation of mankind due to His love and grace
Acts 16:30-31	'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved'
John 3:7	'You must be born again'
John 4:10	the living water

**sin/repentance/forgiveness**

Genesis 4:7	'if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at the door'
Genesis 4:10	'Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground.'
	(story of Cain and Abel)
Psalm 32:1-5	'Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven'
Psalm 53:2-3	'there is no one who does good, not even one'
Psalm 66:18-20	'If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened'
Isaiah 1:2-3	'I reared children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against me'

sin/repentance/forgiveness cont'd

Isaiah 12:1	'Although you were angry with me, your anger has turned away and you have comforted me.'
Ezekiel 33:8	'[if] you do not speak out to dissuade him from his ways, that wicked man will die for his sin, and I will hold you accountable for his blood.'
Luke 7:37-50**	a sinful woman is forgiven
Luke 15:10	'there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents'
Luke 15:18-19	'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you.'
Luke 24:46-47	'repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached'
John 5:1-14	the healing at the pool: 'stop sinning or something worse may happen to you'
Romans 6:23*	'the wages of sin is death'
I Timothy 1:15	'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners'
I Peter 2:9	'you are a chosen people...called out of darkness'
I John 1:8-9	'if we confess our sins...he will forgive us'
Romans 8:7-8	'The sinful mind is hostile to God'
Acts 2:38	'Repent and be baptized...that your sins may be forgiven'
Acts 10:43	'everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness' 'casting away sins' 'moral disease and sin and of its cure through faith in Christ'

afterlife: death/eternity/the final judgment

Genesis 27:2	'I am now an old man and don't know the day of my death'
Matthew 7:21,23	heaven
Luke 16:19-31	death and eternal separation from God
John 3:13	'No one has ever gone into heaven except...the Son of Man.'
John 3:16**	'God so loved the world that He gave his only son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life'
John 6:27	'Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life.'
Acts 17:30-31	the final judgment
Isaiah 27:13	'a great trumpet will sound...[they] will worship in Jerusalem'
Joel 2:1	'Let all who live in the land tremble, for the day of the Lord is coming.'
Amos 4:12	'prepare to meet your God'
Matthew 24:44	the Second Coming of Christ
I Cor 15:55	'Where, O death, is your sting?'
II Thess 1:7-10	the final judgment 'news which related to another world as well as to this'
II Peter 3:10	Second Coming of Christ
Revelation 1:7	Second Coming of Christ
Revelation 1:17-18	'I hold the keys of death and Hades'
Revelation 7:9-10	the final judgment
Revelation 14:13	'Blessed are those who die in the Lord'
Revelation 20:11-12	the final judgment
Revelation 22:20	Second Coming of Christ

**afterlife: death/eternity/the final judgment cont'd**

- \* 'find shelter from the impending wrath'
- 'flee from the wrath to come'
- 'their eternal welfare'
- 'the glory of the prize which is before us'
- 'prepare for death'
- 'on the resurrection'
- 'the Day of Judgment'
- 'on their souls' eternal interests'
- 'the soul's immortality and a future state of rewards and punishments and the love of God'
- 'on the future world'
- 'on being happy here and hereafter'
- 'about eternal things'
- 'importance of eternal things'
- raising Lazarus from the dead
- 'God, their souls, and eternity'

**God's laws**

- Genesis 9:5-6\* 'whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed'
- Leviticus 19:32 'show respect for the elderly'
- Psalm 119:59-60 'I will hasten and not delay to obey your commands.'
- Psalm 119:80 'May my heart be blameless toward your decrees'
- Matthew 19:1-8 sermon against divorce/polygamy
- \* 'evils of polygamy'
- 'nature and duties of the Lord's Day'
- John 4:16-19 the adulterous woman
- I Cor 6:19\* 'your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit'
- I Cor 6:20 'honor God with your body'
- II Peter 3:14 'make effort to be found spotless, blameless'

Note: The Ten Commandments were recited at every sabbath service.

**Miscellaneous**

- Genesis 1\*\* creation story
- Genesis 9 God's covenant with Noah
- Genesis 9:25-27 'Cursed be Canaan! The lowest of slaves will he be to his brother.'
- Genesis 28:22 Jacob to God: 'All that you give me I will give you a tenth.'
- Genesis 22:6-10 Abraham sacrificing his son Isaac
- Deuteronomy 8:2 'Remember how the Lord your God led you...to humble you and to test you'
- Joshua 24:15\*\* 'choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve'
- I Samuel 12:24 'fear the Lord and serve Him faithfully'
- Psalm 68:18 'When you ascended on high, you led captives in you train'
- Psalm 90:15-16 'May your deeds be shown to your servants...'
- Psalm 92:1 'It is good to praise the Lord'

Miscellaneous Cont'd

Psalm 118:24	'This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it.'
Psalm 119:105	'Your word is a lamp to my feet'
Isaiah 55:5	'nations that do not know you will hasten to you'
Daniel 5:5-6	the writing on the wall (story of Daniel and Belshazzar)
Matthew 5:1-12*	'Blessed are the poor in spirit...those who mourn...the meek...the merciful...'
Matthew 6:33	'seek first his kingdom and his righteousness'
Matthew 9:35-38	'the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few'
Matthew 26:15	the betrayal of Judas Iscariot
Mark 4:3-7	the rejection of the Word of God
Mark 4:8	the acceptance of the Word of God
Mark 5:1-20	the healing of the demon-possessed man
	'soul being in darkness, freeness of grace, happiness attainable'
**	'suffering and death of Christ'
Luke 5:12-15	healing of the leper
John 11:36	the love of Jesus for Lazarus
Acts 8:37-39	'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God'
Acts 10:36	'the good news of peace'
Acts 14:10-17*	the healing of the lame man; the apostles tell the people to worship God and not them
Acts 17:26	the creation of all people
Romans 4:5	righteousness through faith
Romans 5:1-5	peace, joy, love; the purpose of suffering
Colossians 1:27	God's truth revealed to mankind
I Cor 1:23	'we preach Christ crucified'
I Cor 7:29	'the time is short'
I Cor 11:23-28	the eucharistic ceremony (bread and wine)
James 4:6	'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble'
James 4:10	'Humble yourselves before the Lord'
I Thess 5:16-18	'Be joyful...pray continually...give thanks'
	'Divine Grace...Redemption of the World'
	'Cain and Abel'
	'History of Job' (suffering)

Several patterns can be discerned from the above analysis. As shown in the many passages describing God's nature, the missionaries stressed that God was near, knowable, and interested in the affairs of man. However, the abundance of passages stressing God's punishment of sinners during and after life indicate that drawing close to this God presented a fearful prospect to Africans.

Another feature of these sermons is their abstract nature. The Old and New Testaments contain many stories of men of faith such as Moses, David, Daniel, Paul, Peter, etc. These practical narratives, which pastoral communities would have more easily related to, were rarely presented. The narratives that were told usually concerned miraculous healings (see Miscellaneous), although the missionaries downplayed the power of God to perform the same miracles in nineteenth-century Xhosaland.

The relative scarcity of sermons about God's laws is deceptive. The missionaries often rebuked people when they were seen to violate God's standards; however these rebukes are not reflected in the list of sermon topics. In addition, there are few if any full sermon texts available; it is probable that the missionaries specifically attacked African cultural practices in the practical applications of their sermons on sin.

The central theme that runs throughout the sermons is therefore man's sinfulness, God's willingness to save man from his sin, and man's choice in deciding whether to repent, accept salvation, and go to heaven or reject the Gospel and be doomed to hell.

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