

‘I Will Gather All Nations and Tongues’: Christian Missions and Racial Integration in the Cape Colony in the Aftermath of Abolition*

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Missionaries and Apprentices

There were two emancipation days for slaves in South Africa. On 1 December 1834 slavery was officially ended, but the former slaves remained in bondage as ‘apprentices’ for another four years. Though they were no longer literally human property, the ex-slaves faced disabilities that caused their condition to be tantamount to slavery; in some ways it was even worse.¹ In this article, we shall refer to 1 December 1834 as the day of abolition. The second liberation, which will here be called emancipation, occurred on 1 December 1838, when apprenticeship – and thus forced labor – ended. During the transition period between abolition and emancipation, certain Christian missionaries tried to create a new sort of society in the Cape Colony.

One noteworthy thing about both days is the subdued way in which many former slaves greeted them. About their behaviour on abolition day, London Missionary Society (LMS) missionary William Elliott wrote that ‘the first of December has passed quietly ... Not the slightest unpleasantness has occurred.’² *De Zuid Afrikaan*, a paper sympathetic to Dutch slaveholding farmers, noted that 1 December passed ‘quietly and orderly’.³ Similar reports of dignified behavior on both abolition and emancipation days came from numerous locations in the Cape Colony: the missions at Hankey, Pacaltsdorp, Genadendal and Elim, the towns of Uitenhage, Grahamstown, Stellenbosch, Worcester, and Paarl, as well as Cape Town.

One should not think from these reports that the former slaves were indifferent towards the meaning of these days. L.G. Messer of the LMS’s Uitenhage mission reported a full chapel on abolition day with ‘hundreds of people standing out of doors’ during his services.⁴ The *South African Commercial Advertiser*, a liberal newspaper and rival of *De Zuid Afrikaan*, reported a parade of freed

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1. See Nigel Worden, ‘Between Slavery and Freedom: The Apprenticeship Period, 1834 to 1838,’ in N. Worden and C. Crais, eds., *Breaking the Chains* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1994), 117-144, for an effective analysis of the apprentices’ slave-like conditions.
2. Elliott to London Missionary Society (henceforth LMS), 22 Dec. 1834, Congregational Council for World Mission Archives, Yale Divinity School Library, H2130 (henceforth CWM), fiche #158.
3. *De Zuid Afrikaan* (henceforth ZA), 2 and 5 December 1834.
4. Messer to LMS, 20 Jan. 1835, CWM, #196.

people.⁵ Indeed, some began annual celebrations on the anniversary of the happy day almost immediately. Wesleyan missionaries assisted ‘in commemorating the abolition of slavery, when the Children of different Sunday Schools assembled in the Gardens’ of Cape Town in 1836, and Robert Ross reports that annual memorials continued at least until the 1880s.⁶

Sometimes it seemed as though certain whites were as delighted about abolition and emancipation as the former slaves. On abolition day, Lady Margaret Herschel ‘could not help going at 3 A.M. to congratulate poor Leah [her servant] on her freedom.’ She does not say how Leah responded to a visit at that hour; Leah was ‘poor’ because, as Lady Herschel notes presciently, freedom ‘will not make much difference to her, till her apprenticeship is out.’⁷

Missionaries were especially enthusiastic about the slaves’ liberation. ‘The first of December [1838] was a joyful day for us,’ wrote Edward Williams of the LMS’s Hankey mission. ‘As soon as the Apprentices came together we had another meeting of public thanks that the yoke of slavery was broken.’⁸ One unidentified Wesleyan wrote in his journal that he awoke at two in the morning on 1 December 1834 ‘with the words, “Africa is free” strongly impressed on my mind.’ One reason for his joy, in addition no doubt to his happiness at his charges’ freedom, was his hope for more converts. ‘May this circumstance,’ he added, ‘tend to spread the Gospel amongst them, that they may be “free indeed”.’ He included this bit of forgettable doggerel:

The end is near, – it will not wait
Bonds, yokes, and scourges have this date,
Slavery itself shall fall away,
And be a tale of yesterday.⁹

The Scramble for Converts

Missionaries’ hopes for new converts seem to have been realized. There are numerous reports that the Christian churches’ congregations were swelled by large numbers of former slaves on both days, and growth continued in their aftermath. The church ‘is now full on Sabbath days,’ reported the LMS missionary at Pacaltsdorp in early 1835. Attendance by blacks at Paarl was ‘overflowing’, stated Elliott in 1838 on the eve of final emancipation.¹⁰ The Quaker traveler James Backhouse reported that by May of 1840, the Rhenish Mission at Worcester had found it necessary to enlarge its chapel in the aftermath of emancipation; at

5. *South African Commercial Advertiser* (henceforth SACA), 6 Dec.1834.

6. Hodgson to Wesleyan Missionary Society (henceforth WMS), 2 Dec.1836, Methodist Missionary Society Archives, Yale Divinity School Library, H2711 (henceforth MMS), #255. Robert Ross, *Status and Respectability in the Cape Colony, 1750-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 147. Lady Margaret Herschel reports a parade of Sunday school children on the ‘first anniversary of emancipation’, but dates the event 1 December 1836. Brian Warner, ed., *Lady Herschel: Letters from the Cape* (Cape Town, Friends of the South African Library, 1991), 125.

7. *Ibid.*, 59-60.

8. Williams to LMS, 20 December 1838, CWM, #225.

9. Anon to WMS, June 1835, MMS, #252.

10. Anderson to LMS, 6 Jan.1835, CWM, #196; Elliott to LMS, 23 Aug. 1838, CWM, #222.

Paarl, the same society had had to enlarge the chapel three times in the months following final emancipation.¹¹

The Moravians showed considerable growth on their three mission stations. Between 1837 and 1840, the population at Genadendal increased from 1,446 to 2,187, Elim from 416 to 715, and Groenekloof from 725 to 1096.¹² Because converts living at the Moravian missions usually had enough land there to make an independent living, farmers were especially hostile to this drain on their supply of labor.

The Wesleyan Missionary Society's Edward Edwards claimed that the chapel at Somerset was 'generally well attended and sometimes crowded with attentive hearers ... The whole of the people of Colour in connection with our chapel here were formerly slaves.' He reported a similar situation at Stellenbosch, where 'our congregations have been very good since the day of emancipation.'¹³

While slavery existed, many missionaries denounced the restraints on their ability to proselytize among slaves. Not only did masters frequently hinder their ability to do so, but the evident connection between Christianity and slavery caused many slaves to gravitate toward Islam as their religion of choice. Several missionaries, prominent among whom were John Philip and Elliott of the LMS, complained vociferously about this effect of slavery.¹⁴

As final emancipation approached, missionaries gathered themselves for what they apparently regarded as an all-out war with the 'Mohammedan delusion', as Elliott put it. Warnings about the difficulties of the struggle came frequently as final emancipation approached. One Wesleyan lamented the fact that there were thousands of Coloured people, by which he meant both apprentices and other free non-whites, and but one 'Christian teacher' in Cape Town. 'Consequently,' he added, 'vast numbers of them are embracing the Mahometan faith.'¹⁵ Philip argued that 'we should have a missionary or two who should devote himself exclusively to the Mohammedans and the Slave Apprentices. Every means should be employed to make a favourable impression on their minds at this time.'¹⁶ This problem was not limited to Cape Town. The Port Elizabeth LMS Auxiliary reported in 1838 that 'Mahomedanism is ... gaining converts among these people and we must therefore ... endeavor to check this growing evil.'¹⁷

Thomas Hodgson, the superintendent of the Wesleyans at the Cape, claimed, no doubt with some exaggeration, that '100% of this class of people [i.e. Coloureds¹⁸] are rushing into the arms of Mohamedism, not so much from

11. Backhouse, *Narrative*, 610; 622-23.

12. Krüger, *Pear Tree Blossoms*, 196.

13. Edwards to WMS, 20 Feb. 1839, MMS, #263, and 30 May 1841, MMS, #273.

14. R.L. Watson, *The Slave Question: Liberty and Property in South Africa* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1990), 172-176. John Edwin Mason's *Social Death and Resurrection: Slavery and Emancipation in South Africa* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003), contains a penetrating account of the role of Islam in the lives of slaves. See his Chapter 7.

15. Bingham to WMS, 24 Jan. 1838, MMS, #260.

16. Philip to LMS, 6 Dec. 1837, CWM, #214-215.

17. Report of the Port Elizabeth Auxiliary, 17 Sept. 1838, CWM #224.

18. I have adopted the term 'Coloured' for people of mixed descent. Despite its official use by the Apartheid state, it seems to have persisted with relatively little recrimination in contemporary South Africa.

any doctrinal connection, but because they will have a Faith and Society which the Christian people so-called will not allow them to have with them.¹⁹

Hodgson's belief that the behavior of 'so-called' Christians was at least partially responsible for the advance of Islam was shared by numerous others. Philip commented that slaves had seen 'nothing in the conduct of their Masters to induce them to fall in love with their religion, and now that they will be shortly leaving their old abodes, if a town is not provided for them they will nearly all be received into the houses of the Malays and make open profession of their religion.'²⁰ Backhouse's traveling companion, George Walker, wrote that apprentices were 'treated more in accordance with Christian principles by the Mahom'n [sic] Priests and fellow professors than they were by the Xens [sic] ... The band of fellowship was extended to them, their wants, if in distress, were attended to, etc., etc.'²¹ Backhouse referred to 'the kindness with which the Mahomedan priests treated the Coloured people, contrasted with the neglect and oppression with which they had generally been treated by those professing Christianity.'²²

Nigel Worden concludes that Muslim belief was strong enough that a number of apprentices absconded in order to practice their Islam more freely, 'a clear indication not only of the importance of Islam amongst the Cape Town underclass but also an assertion of the right to worship despite opposition of owners ... Certainly Islam was a marker of rejection of owner control.'²³

It is difficult to get a clear picture of how successful Christian missionaries were in stemming the tide of Muslim conversion. There is anecdotal evidence of success. Modest inroads into the Muslim community were made before the 1838 emancipation. Messer at Uitenhage noted three Muslim converts in early 1835. As Messer reports it, one of them, an apprentice, had at least a partly temporal motivation:

A young woman with her two children was sent from Cape Town in order to be sold ... Accidentally she came to my church, and she herself told me with tears in her eyes, that when she heard the preaching of Christ ..., that we can be happy through Him by free grace without money ..., she thought ... why have I been so foolish and listened to my priest who continually says, 'Bring, bring, bring money, bring rice, bring fowls ...'²⁴

A few years later Messer told of one of his flock 'who fell in love with a Mahometan', married him, and was thus excommunicated. 'After two years she could not stand it any longer. She came back again trembling and wept most

19. Hodgson to WMS, 18 Aug. 1836, MMS, #255.

20. Philip to LMS, 6 Dec. 1837, CWM #214-215. Muslim ex-slaves were regularly referred to as Malays, since the East Indies was the provenance of many of them.

21. Geo. Washington Walker to Geo. Richardson, 10 Sept. 1838, Miscellaneous Letters, Box R4/5. Library of the Religious Society of Friends, London.

22. Backhouse, *Narrative*, 82. See also Watson, *The Slave Question*, 172-176.

23. N. Worden, 'Slave Apprenticeship in Cape Town,' *Studies in the History of Cape Town* (Cape Town: Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town), vol. 7, 1994, 39.

24. Messer to LMS, 20 Jan. 1835, CWM, #196.

bitterly,' and was restored to the church. Messer reported, with some pride, that 'her husband followed her,' by which he apparently meant that he converted to Christianity. He also said he had two Muslim candidates for baptism in January of 1836 and three more in June of 1838.²⁵ Elliott claimed one Muslim convert at Paarl by 1835, who joined the church at the behest of his wife. He also claimed that 'a number of Muhammedans attend very regularly.' Adam Robson at Port Elizabeth reported that 'even Mahometan children' had purchased copies of the catechism.²⁶

After emancipation, there is more evidence of success in Messer's mission at Uitenhage. In the immediate aftermath of emancipation, he reported 171 former apprentice members, including 'thirteen converted Mahometans.' In addition, there were 'several more Mahometan Inquirers'.²⁷ This shows considerable growth from the mere three candidates for baptism he cited in 1835.

But conversion of Muslims to Christianity at missions other than Paarl and Uitenhage apparently took place rarely, if at all. This conclusion is admittedly based on negative evidence. But given the alarm about Islam widely expressed by the missionary establishment in the final days of slavery, one would expect other missionaries to have mentioned Muslim conversions in their reports to their London superiors, had there been any. But they did not.

Something on the order of 39,000 slaves became apprentices in 1834. In 1839, the government reported 7,580 Muslims in the colony.²⁸ Indeed, Robert Shell shows that the Muslim population at the Cape actually increased after emancipation.²⁹ (But the figure also suggests that the fears of a flood of Muslim converts were exaggerated.) It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that, despite occasional successes, Christianity made little headway among Muslims in the apprenticeship period, for reasons we shall examine shortly.

One reason for what increase there was, in addition to the evident link between Christianity and slavery, is that abolition brought vigorous conversion efforts by Muslims to counter those by Christians; one Wesleyan described their priests as 'exceedingly zealous.'³⁰ The increase in Christian church attendance among former slaves seems, therefore, to have come largely from those who had professed neither Christianity nor Islam while they were slaves, or from those who were interested in Christianity while they were slaves but prevented from practicing it by their masters.

Though there were relatively few former Muslims, some mission congregations became considerably more ethnically diverse after 1834. Lady Herschel reports that an unnamed 'servant', probably once a slave, 'takes in all she hears on Sunday morning when I take her especially into our Bible lessons. She expresses a great wish to be baptized.'³¹ The Wesleyan Barnabas Shaw was par-

25. Messer to LMS, 29 June 1838, CWM #221.

26. Robson to LMS, 25 Sept. 1838, CWM #223.

27. Messer to LMS, 29 December 1838, CWM #221.

28. Return of church membership in the Cape Colony, enclosure in Napier to Normanby, 25 Nov. 1839, PRO, CO 48/202.

29. R. Shell, *Children of Bondage: A Social History of the Slave Society at the Cape of Good Hope, 1652-1838* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1994), 356-357.

30. Anon to WMS, June, 1835, MMS, #232.

31. Warner, *Lady Herschel: Letters*, 69.

ticularly pleased at developments such as this. 'At the chapel in the afternoon,' he wrote in 1835, 'the congregation was large, embracing persons of all colours, and of almost every age. Their faces were as fair as the whitest European, and sable, as the blackest son of Mozambique.' For Shaw, the meaning was clear: 'How encouraging is that promise of Jehovah, "it shall come to pass that I will gather all nations and tongues, and they shall behold my glory."'32

Messer at Uitenhage took evident pride in the multi-ethnic, multi-racial character of his flock. He wrote in 1836 that 'it is particularly interesting to see a church of Christ gathered together of Hottentots, Bootshuanas, Bushmen, and apprentices from so many nations as Madagascar, Javanese, etc., etc. They are all brethren and sisters in the Lord.' His evening services were 'crowded', when there were generally 'a great many white people.'33 Government officials apparently participated in mixed services at Uitenhage. John Fawcett, an English traveler, reported in 1836 that the civil commissioner and his family, 'and many other European inhabitants, are frequently to be found ... worshipping with Messer's Hottentot congregation.'34

In early 1840 Messer complained that his chapel was 'much too small', because it was 'always filled with people of various nations.'35 In 1841, in addition to the various peoples he cited in 1836, he reported even greater diversity: Among the eighty-three new church members were 'Mantatees', 'Fingoes', emancipated slaves, 'Portagees', 'natives of Bengal', 'Frenchmen and Mahometans.' 'Thus will the holy Scripture gradually be fulfilled, that all nations shall see the salvation of Christ,' he asserted.36

There is evidence of racial diversity in churches elsewhere in the colony. Elliott at Paarl described his mission as having a 'diversified complexion' in early 1835, with the chapel 'comfortably filled' and occasionally 'overflowing.'37 By 1838 he could say that 'the attendance ..., both by blacks and whites, in, and out of the village, is increasing ... The attendance of whites is encouraging, and that of blacks overflowing.'38 When Elliott later moved to Uitenhage, apparently to replace Messer, he would conduct a Sabbath service for his 'English congregation' as well as a separate meeting for 'Mr. Messer's congregation', which was presumably still as diverse as it had been when Messer was active. There was, however, also a 'united' weekly prayer meeting.39 The LMS's George Barker said that when he traveled, 'I preach to the White as well as the colored people if the house is sufficiently large.' When space was limited, however, he had two services, segregated by race.40 The small LMS mission in Caledon district had among its congregation 'farmers, from 5 to 30, and also a few of the emancipated slaves.'41

32. Shaw to WMS, 11 June 1835, MMS, #251.

33. Messer to LMS, 15 Jan. 1836, CWM, #206.

34. John Fawcett, *Account of an Eighteenth Months Residence at the Cape of Good Hope in 1835-1835* (Cape Town: printed by G.J. Pike, 1836), 44.

35. Messer to LMS, 2 Jan. 1840, CWM, #236.

36. Messer to LMS, 12 Jan. 1841, CWM, #249.

37. Elliott to LMS, 20 Feb. 1835, CWM, #197.

38. Elliott to LMS, 23 Aug. 1838, CWM, #222.

39. Elliott to LMS, 29 Apr. 1841, CWM, #253.

40. Barker to LMS, 27 Jan. 1840, CWM, #236.

41. Helm to LMS, 26 Jan. 1835, CWM, #196.

At Pacaltsdorp, John Melvill reported in 1838 that there were ‘sixty-nine coloured (Hottentots and Apprentices) hearers and nine white persons’ in one of his congregations. On a subsequent Sabbath, however, his congregation of ninety-five was ‘all coloured.’⁴² There seems to have been some attendance by whites in services at the Moravian mission at Genadendal. Lady Herschel noted in 1836 ‘a few boers with their families’ among a predominantly black crowd waiting to enter the chapel there.⁴³

Backhouse and Walker, on their lengthy tour of southern Africa, were able to witness first-hand the activity on mission stations during this transitional period. At Swellendam, they reported that the Dutch Reformed minister (a Scot named William Robertson; a shortage of Dutch ministers had led to the recruiting of Scottish Presbyterians) had ‘succeeded in a considerable measure, in convincing the inhabitants of the unreasonable and unchristian character of the prejudices they had entertained against the Coloured people.’ His victory, such as it was, was not complete. Though black and white people attended the same services, they were internally segregated: ‘When the meetings are appointed for the white people, the Coloured sit behind, and when for the Coloured, the white sit behind them; hitherto they have not been prevailed upon to mix.’⁴⁴ At Beaufort West, however, the Dutch Reformed minister Colin Fraser preached to a ‘crowded congregation of Boors, English, Hottentots, Caffres, and Mantaties, promiscuously seated.’⁴⁵

In 1840, Backhouse and Walker visited a Rhenish mission in Tulbagh. They held a Quaker meeting in its chapel; the congregation ‘consisted of white and coloured people; it afforded a pleasing evidence of the decay of unreasonable prejudices.’⁴⁶ A short time later they presided over a meeting at a Paris Evangelical Missionary Society station in Wagonmakers Valley for the white inhabitants, ‘several of whom were pious’, at which ‘several of the coloured people were also present.’ That same evening, they held a service ‘for the coloured, which was attended by some of the whites.’⁴⁷

When they visited Worcester, Backhouse noted that the Dutch inhabitants were ‘temporarily annoyed’ at the emancipation of the slaves, but were ‘now reconciled to continuing their commendable care for the Coloured people.’⁴⁸ It is unclear what he meant by ‘care’, but he professed a belief that though race prejudice was once strong, it ‘has given way in Southern Africa, since the emancipation of the slaves.’⁴⁹ He put it more strongly, and more paternalistically, elsewhere:

42. Melvill to LMS, 1 March 1838, CWM, #219.

43. Warner, *Lady Herschel: Letters*, 127.

44. Backhouse, *Narrative*, 105.

45. Quoted in Ross, ‘Congregations, Missionaries, and the Grahamstown Schism of 1842-1843,’ in John de Gruchy, ed., *The London Missionary Society in Southern Africa, 1799-1999* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2000), 123.

46. *Ibid.*, 608-609.

47. *Ibid.*, 618.

48. Extracts from the Journal of James Backhouse, Part X, 092.3 BAC 1838, Library of the Religious Society of Friends, London. He repeats the point in *Narrative*, 610.

49. *Ibid.*, 118.

The day may not be far distant in Southern Africa, when ancient wrongs shall be forgotten; when the man of European extraction, shall give the hand of fellowship to the Hottentot, the Caffer, the Bechuana, or the descendant of the emancipated slave; when these people of deeper coloured skin shall have to rejoice in the knowledge of Christianity and of useful arts, derived from the White inhabitants of the land, and all shall unite together in praising God ...⁵⁰

Adam Robson at Port Elizabeth claimed that ‘perhaps there is no place in the whole colony where there is less prejudice against persons of colour than there is here.’ This was partly due, he believed, to ‘the mingling together in the service of Jehovah.’ The LMS Sabbath school was also integrated: ‘we have children of the most respectable Dutch and English inhabitants mixing promiscuously with Hottentots, Fingoe, and other children of colour,’ Robson reported in 1837.⁵¹

Robson, it should be noted, consciously sought a mixed school population. In 1835 he wrote that schools were ‘succeeding pretty well.’ He wanted ‘European children to attend with the Hottentots,’ because it would have the effect of ‘diminishing prejudice.’ The congregation at Port Elizabeth was relatively small (there were fifteen European and sixteen ‘native’ members in 1835),⁵² and it is probable that at this time there were few educational opportunities nearby. An absence of choice may help explain the willingness of white and black to attend school together.

Schools

There was considerable concern about the education of the slaves after they were freed. On the eve of abolition, the colony’s Legislative Council unanimously passed a resolution urging education for ‘Hottentots and people of color’ so that ‘they will be rendered not only useful members of the colonial community, but valuable subjects of the British Empire.’⁵³ Missionary societies tried to establish schools. This effort was in part stimulated by the spread of Islam. We noted above the concern of the WMS missionary that there were not enough ‘Christian teachers’ in Cape Town, which caused ex-slaves to embrace Islam. As Helen Ludlow puts it, missionaries believed that ‘every apprentice child, heathen or Muslim, who could be brought into a Christian school could be “nurtured and saved” and through him, possibly his parents too.’⁵⁴

50. *Ibid.*, 197.

51. Robson to Philip, 10 Nov. 1837, CWM, #215.

52. Robson to LMS, 3 Feb 1835, CWM, #196-197.

53. Legislative Council resolution, 13 Sept. 1834, PRO, CO 48/156.

54. Helen Ludlow, “‘Working at the Heart’: The London Missionary Society in Cape Town, 1819-1844,” in de Gruchy, ed., *London Missionary Society*, 112.

The LMS was in the forefront. This may have been in part because of its allies in London. The elder James Read wrote from England that government officials Sir George Grey and Lord Glenelg were ‘most friendly to the Society. Dr. Philip is to have £3000 for schools,’⁵⁵ implying that Grey and Glenelg helped the LMS get the money.

John Philip’s wife Jane administered the LMS school in Cape Town, and members of the congregation volunteered as teachers in its early days. At first the society had two schools, one for the poor, the other for students in ‘better circumstances.’ By 1831 the latter school had apparently ceased, but the former had a mixed population of 24 free blacks, 37 English, 17 Dutch, and 75 slave children. By 1839, the school served about 230 children, about half of whom apparently were Muslims.⁵⁶ In 1842, there were 300 students, 288 of them children of former slaves.⁵⁷

Cape Town Muslims had ways of countering the popularity of Christian schools. As early as 1793 they had established a religious school of their own, the Dorp Street *Madrasah*, and by the early 1830s there were at least twelve such schools. According to Achmat Davids, the Christian schools ‘did not overly worry the Muslim community,’ because they had devised an effective strategy for dealing with them. They left their children in the schools for several years, enough time to learn to read and write both English and Dutch and to ‘master arithmetic’. Then they would remove the children from the Christian schools and place them in Muslim ones.⁵⁸

Later, Christian teachers were imported from England; a Miss Buzzacot seems to have been especially valuable.⁵⁹ Elliott at Paarl requested funds for a new school room in late 1836, ‘for the benefit of the Apprentices and other persons of color.’⁶⁰ Messer established a school which met on Monday evenings at Elephant’s River, near George, which attracted ‘not less than 80 to 100 scholars’, all apprentices or servants.⁶¹

The Wesleyans were a bit slower to enter the education field. James Cameron worried in September 1834 that no one was planning ‘to provide for the intellectual or spiritual wants of the slaves ...,’ and he urged the Society to get busy. Their funds were apparently insufficient. Thomas Hodgson wrote William Backhouse in England asking if English Quakers could help underwrite the cost of a schoolteacher.⁶² (I have found no evidence that this initiative bore fruit.) In 1838 Hodgson noted ruefully a belated report from Barnabas Shaw that a government grant of £300 was available for schools for apprentices. ‘I regret not having been informed of the Government offer ... It is too late and I can only

55. Read to Kitchingman, Hankey, 2 August 1836, in B. le Cordeur and C. Saunders, eds., *The Kitchingman Papers* (Johannesburg: The Brenthurst Press, 1976), 165.

56. Mason, *Social Death and Resurrection*, 197.

57. Ludlow, “‘Working at the Heart’”, 108-109

58. A. Davids, ‘Muslim-Christian Relations in 19th Century Cape Town,’ *Kronos*, vol. 19 1992, 87-93.

59. *Ibid.*, 113-114.

60. Elliott to LMS, 4 Oct. 1838, CWM, #208.

61. Messer to LMS, 23 Dec. 1836, CWM, #209.

62. Hodgson to W. Backhouse, 9 Dec. 1836, MMS #255.

pass it with a sigh.’⁶³ Despite the Society’s difficulties, however, it was able to establish five schools in the vicinity of Cape Town. The thirty-two teachers were apparently unpaid volunteers, and there were 210 students.⁶⁴

There is little doubt about many apprentices’ enthusiasm for European-style education. Cameron said in mid-1835 that two apprentices asked him for money to buy a spelling book, ‘as they are very desirous of learning to read.’⁶⁵ Edward Edwards reported that former slaves at Somerset were ‘most urgent’ in asking for a schoolmaster there, ‘for the purpose of instructing their children in the truth of our Holy Religion.’⁶⁶ Understanding scripture better was probably one reason many former slaves eagerly pursued literacy; by the same token, they undoubtedly knew the crucial material advantages of literacy in colonial society. This is probably why Muslims kept their children in Christian schools until they became literate and could do arithmetic. John Edwin Mason, in noting ‘the disparity between the number of students and the number of converts,’ suggests that ‘at least some of the slaves were using the missionary and government schools for their own purposes.’⁶⁷

Freed children and adults had to be approached differently, because of the adults’ work schedules. In addition to Messer’s evening school, noted above, by 1838 Miss Buzzacot was teaching seventy girls during the day and a number of adult females in the evening, and the LMS started evening classes for Coloured men in 1838.⁶⁸ Giddy in Cape Town reported an increase in numbers at a WMS adult school in 1835.⁶⁹

Masters were often an obstacle to apprentices’ education. ‘I have repeatedly offered to instruct them in reading two evenings in the week at the Mission House,’ the Wesleyan Richard Giddy stated, ‘but so indifferent are their Masters to the subject and so averse to the religious instruction of their slaves that I experience the greatest difficulty in getting access to them.’⁷⁰

Another obstacle to providing education was the dispersed nature of the population. Governor D’Urban was especially concerned. ‘In the country,’ he reported, ‘where ... there cannot be more than one child of an age to be educated – be it white or coloured race – to every five square miles, – it is vain to prescribe, or to pretend to enforce conditions for the education, or religious instruction of a few hundreds of poor children scattered over an extent of country not inferior to that of Great Britain.’⁷¹ Another government official reported that education was absent on isolated farms. He feared that apprentices would ‘fall into habits of idleness and become indifferent to their future means of support.’⁷²

63. Hodgson to WMS, 14 Feb. 1838, MMS, #260.

64. Shaw to WMS, 5 Feb. 1836, MMS, #253.

65. Cameron to WMS, 21 May 1835, MMS, #251.

66. Edwards to WMS, 20 Feb. 1839, MMS, #263.

67. Mason, *Social Death and Resurrection*, 196.

68. Ludlow, “‘Working at the Heart’”, 112; 114.

69. Giddy to WMS, 10 Aug. 1835, MMS, #253.

70. Giddy to WMS, n.d. (late 1835), MMS, #253.

71. D’Urban to Glenelg, 9 Jan. 1838, PRO, CO 48/187.

72. McKay to Glenelg, 14 Nov. 1837, PRO, CO 48/186.

Ordinance 50, a measure in the colony designed, among other things, to free Coloured people from a coercive labor system, supposedly made all men equal before the law, regardless of skin color. But in order to capitalize on that equality, people needed access to education. Ordinance 50 did nothing to provide Coloureds with the economic resources needed to have that access.

An example can be seen in Grahamstown. According to the LMS's John Monro, the school was opened 'to all classes, that is to white and coloured children.' At first, the student body was indeed ethnically mixed. 'The attendance is good,' he reported in May 1835, 'averaging at 305. Of this number 48 are children of European parents.' There were also some students from 'Aboriginal tribes,'⁷³ by which he probably meant Xhosa and related peoples. By August 1836, however, no Coloured children were admitted because 'none of our Hottentots were in sufficiently wealthy circumstances to admit of their children being sent.' He urged the society to 'do something' to rectify this situation.⁷⁴ There is no evidence that this happened. Given the large numbers of Coloureds among the original student population, their departure must have severely undermined the school, but their absence was in the long run more damaging to their own prospects for economic success.

Obstacles

The evidence indicates that a number of Christian missionaries in the Cape Colony in the 1830s were concerned about race prejudice and sought integration of the churches and schools as a remedy for it. The ending of slavery put the colony's social situation in considerable flux, and many evidently saw this condition as an opportunity to build a society in which races interacted freely. Integrated schools, given a strong stimulus by missionaries in the aftermath of slavery, persisted in the colony for some time; at the end of the 19th century, according to one estimate, a third of the students in mission schools were poor whites.⁷⁵

Factors inherent in the colony's circumstances, however, hindered missionaries in creating a multi-racial Christianity. Some were the result of the policies of the missions themselves. Others were the outgrowth of the structure of colonial society, which produced influences which, apparently, even the most broad-minded individuals could not withstand. And, not surprisingly, racism played its part.

One of these influences was the fact that the colonial population spoke two primary languages. Numerous accounts exist of missionaries' segregating services, even when they did not necessarily want to, because they had to communicate with one part of the population in English and the other in Dutch. There were exceptions: Robson at Port Elizabeth, for example, stated that 'a number of Hottentots here speak English fluently, and it is pleasing to see them uniting with Europeans in the worship of Jehovah.'⁷⁶

73. Monro to LMS, 14 May 1835, CWM, #198.

74. Monro to LMS, 5 Aug. 1836, CWM, #208.

75. Hermann Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003), 109.

76. Robson to LMS, 22 Mar 1835, CWM, #207.

But many Coloureds spoke only Dutch, or at least the version of it that they were helping to transform into Afrikaans. As a result, missionaries often had to provide multiple services, and most former slaves attended those in Dutch. Dutch-speaking whites had their own church: according to the government's count, there were 72,233 members of the established Dutch Reformed Church in 1839.⁷⁷ Thus we can probably infer that Dutch-language services at the English missions were attended by few whites.

Backhouse indicated some of the difficulties of the dual language situation. On one occasion in Port Elizabeth, he reported a sunrise prayer meeting for coloured Dutch-speakers; then at 7:00 am, there was a service for 'persons speaking English.' On the afternoon of the same day, there were two more services in each language.⁷⁸ The language barrier, it seems, imposed a segregation on mission activity apparently unintended by missionaries.

Some of their own initiatives may have furthered racial segregation, though some were probably inadvertent. In one of his dispatches to London in 1837, Governor Napier reported that John Philip had asked for a grant of land 'to build a black town or village for the slave apprentices, who will be thrown on their own resources at the end of next year.' (We might recall Philip's comment, noted above, that former slaves would continue to embrace Islam 'if a town is not provided for them', implying that a settlement separate from Muslims *and* whites should be established.) Napier asked for advice about how to respond. Lord Glenelg, the Colonial Secretary, replied that he had 'many serious objections' to Philip's plan, but that he would keep an open mind, pending new information.⁷⁹ Glenelg did not specify his objections in the draft of his reply to Napier, but a clue to what they might have been can be seen in Napier's response, probably guided by policy from London, to a similar request from the Wesleyans in 1839.

That Society had established a day and Sabbath school at Stellenbosch for the 'instruction of the late slave population'. They requested funds to pay for a schoolmaster. They also wanted money to build a school in Cape Town. Napier's reply was direct: assuming that these schools were meant only for former slaves, he could not 'approve a plan of congregating considerable bodies of the late apprenticed labourers in separate societies,' because 'nothing can be less in accordance with the intentions of Her Majesty's Government in respect to these people than encouraging them to form themselves into a distinct class of the general community.'⁸⁰ The Colonial Office evidently saw the Wesleyan request as abetting the segregation of the Cape social order and wanted to discourage it. It is possible that Glenelg's objections to Philip's request for land for a 'black town or village' were of the same order.

At any rate, the colonial government of the late 1830s seemed to support the spatial integration of the races. It was also, of course, wary of any policy that might reduce white farmers' access to labor, which separate communities might do.

77. Encl. in Napier to Normanby, 25 Nov.1839, PRO, CO 48/202

78. Backhouse, *Narrative*, 168.

79. Napier to Glenelg, 7 Nov.1837, with draft to Glenelg's reply, CO 48/174.

80. Copy of memorandum to government, with government's reply, in Hodgson to WMS, Feb. 1839, MMS #262.

The creation of such communities of freed slaves and Khoisan had, of course, already begun. The Kat River settlement is probably the best known,⁸¹ though it was not attached to a mission. There were several other such communities. The Moravian missions at Genadendal, Groenekloof, and Elim, for example, had attracted ex-slaves in the aftermath of emancipation.⁸² Some of the English mission societies had similar communities. One such was begun at Hottentots Holland by the Wesleyans. Shaw noted the existence of a chapel there 'with a considerable portion of land attached to it, exactly suited for the liberated slaves to erect huts and make gardens.' This settlement grew modestly over the next several years; four homes were added during 1840.⁸³ These communities helped ameliorate the economic problems, especially land shortage, faced by freed people. But they also established them in settlements apart from the white population.

It is difficult to see what else the missionaries could have done, for they wanted a decent life for their charges. In the larger colonial community there was much antagonism against the freed slaves and other coloureds that inhibited their ability to make an independent living. The overwhelming majority of the whites saw coloureds primarily as a source of exploitable labor and did not like the idea of their having an independent existence. Even some of the strongest opponents of slavery, such as John Fairbairn, the editor of the colony's liberal newspaper, wrote of the desirability of securing farmers' 'command of labour' after emancipation.⁸⁴

Of course, not all missionaries desired a color-blind society with equal fervor. The Dutch Reformed Church did not appoint its first missionary until 1824, and he was instructed to hold separate services,⁸⁵ though its synod of 1829 rescinded this rule.⁸⁶ Philip, whose zeal for the just treatment of all people cannot be doubted, apparently wanted a separate town for freed people. George Barker held services segregated by race as an expedient when space was too limited to serve all congregants together, and, as we have noted, language differences also prompted segregated services. There is no direct evidence that race prejudice motivated these actions.

It is possible also that whites who initially attended integrated services soon reverted to their own separate modes of worship, because their behavior at services differed considerably from that of the Coloureds. John Fawcett, the English visitor, himself rather a strait-laced sort, was revolted by the style of worship. It 'left no pleasing impression.' The Coloured worshippers were 'well dressed and attentive; but they indulge in a practice of giving vent to their feelings during the delivery of the discourse, which greatly mars the beauty and

81. See, for example, Tony Kirk, 'Progress and Decline in the Kat River Settlement, 1829-1854,' *Journal of African History*, vol. 14, 1973, 411-428.

82. E. Elbourne and R. Ross, 'Combatting Spiritual and Social Bondage: Early Missions in the Cape Colony,' in Richard Elphick and Rodney Davenport, eds., *Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social, and Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 45.

83. Shaw to WMS, 11 July 1834, MMS #249; Edwards to WMS, 30 May 1841, MMS #273.

84. SACA, 1 Dec. 1841. Worden analyzes the efforts to secure labor in 'Between Slavery and Freedom,' *passim*.

85. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, 99-100.

86. *Ibid.*, 122.

solemnity of the meeting.’ Though quiet at the start of the sermon, after a few minutes ‘one old woman will commence setting up a yell; shortly after another will join her, until at last a large part of the congregation is in full cry.’ The result was an ‘unseemly and disturbing clamour.’

Fawcett, who was quite sure he knew how Christians should behave, claimed that this activity was ‘at variance with the suppressed and humble feeling of the pious mind, and with that decency and order that ought to pervade a Christian assembly,’⁸⁷ and it is probable that other whites shared this sentiment. Indeed, a faction of the LMS had earlier objected to the ‘tolerance for indigenuous expressions of religiosity’, targeting the branch of the Society represented by LMS pioneers Johannes van der Kemp and James Read, whose concept of Christianity was more syncretic.⁸⁸

The issue of integration had divided the LMS since the second decade of the century. One faction wanted, according to Julia Wells, ‘to maintain a sharper sense of European and African differences and to heighten the sense of the other, “the heathen” African.’⁸⁹ Monro, for example, was replaced by John Locke in the 1840s; he discouraged interaction between Europeans and coloured Christians.⁹⁰ It may well be that the evident enthusiasm for integration of people such as Messer, Robson, Monro, and Elliott, communicated in various ways to the non-white population in the neighborhood, drew freed slaves and others to their services. By the 1840s, there were apparently fewer such missionaries in the LMS.

The assumptions and mission, so to speak, of the missionaries may well have changed as mid-century approached. Elizabeth Elbourne’s insight is worth quoting here: ‘The increased respectability of the missionary movement, combined with the growth of settler society, led to an influx of missionaries who did not want to sacrifice membership in the white community and who emulated the higher status of domestic ministers.’⁹¹ The philosophy of the Wesleyans, in fact, had always tended in this direction. Thus the movement became more inclined to keep Coloureds and Africans at arm’s length, even as they tried to convert them.

Missionary efforts at integration were entangled in the colony’s race prejudice and the related desire for a subservient class of workers. Philip claimed that ‘many of the farmers will rather allow their fields to lie waste than give any advantage of wages, and they will rather support themselves than allow the freedmen to gain anything ... by their freedom.’ Most farmers, he continued, ‘have the art of keeping but not making money and any desire among them of that kind... is at present mastered by their prejudice against the emancipation of the colored races.’⁹² For Philip, a classic liberal, such farmers thus demonstrated the economic irrationality of race prejudice; but it also illustrates the obsession with cheap labor that existed among white farmers in the aftermath of emancipation.

87. Fawcett, *Account*, 44-45.

88. Wells, ‘The Scandal of Rev James Read and the Taming of the London Missionary Society by 1820,’ *South African Historical Journal* (henceforth *SAHJ*), 2(2000), 144.

89. *Ibid.*, 136.

90. Ross, ‘Congregations, Missionaries, and the Grahamstown Schism of 1842-1843,’ in de Gruchy, ed., *London Missionary Society*, 124.

91. Elbourne, ‘Whose Gospel? Conflict in the LMS in the Early 1840s,’ in de Gruchy, ed., *London Missionary Society*, 132.

92. Philip to LMS, 26 Mar.1840, CWM, #241.

Race prejudice was very strong, as there was considerable personal revulsion on the part of many against communing with darker people. Adam Robson, whose optimistic pronouncements about declining race prejudice in Port Elizabeth are noted above, may not have noticed that residential segregation was already beginning there.⁹³ This was a trend that would likely inhibit race interaction as the community grew. (In Cape Town, however, though many well-to-do whites were moving to suburbs, residential race-based segregation had not yet developed in the town itself.)⁹⁴

Evidence of race prejudice nonetheless abounds. When, as we noted above, Backhouse expressed his hope that the European would extend ‘the hand of fellowship’ to dark-skinned people, he may have been thinking of an incident at the settlement at Jonkers Fontein when his companion Walker tried to shake hands with a servant. He was advised by local whites not to do so ‘if he hoped to make his way with the white population.’⁹⁵ Backhouse also reported that a white brick-maker at Port Elizabeth recoiled from using well water after ‘Coloureds’.⁹⁶ And even in death many whites did not want to mix with others: both Quaker travellers reported and denounced the presence of segregated cemeteries.⁹⁷

And a final anecdote: when Backhouse and Walker visited a small Dutch Reformed Church near Zuurbraak, they found that the minister there had admonished his congregation because, despite the decision of the synod of 1829 to integrate services, he had found ‘the prejudices of the Dutch so strong, that some of them were much disturbed at the idea of the Hottentots coming into the “Kerk”; and they afterwards got up a protest against their being allowed to assemble there.’⁹⁸ It was evidently easier for the Dutch Reformed establishment to decree integration of its congregations than to enforce it.

It may be dangerous, furthermore, to assume that the former slaves themselves were eager to participate in integrated activities. Virtually all the evidence here reflects a European perspective. But consider George Barker’s comments about his threat in 1842 to place ‘Colored children’ in the government school soon to be established at Paarl, because the old ‘slaven school’ for ex-slaves was soon to close. Local whites were outraged by Barker’s initiative, but also ‘the Colored people begged me not to do it, but open a separate school for them,’ he states. He proposed an explanation for their reticence: If ‘I had put the Colored children in [the government school with white children], they would all have been excluded in one month for irregularity in attendance. Besides they would not have had the confidence to oppose the others in class, and their progress would have been prevented.’⁹⁹ If Barker’s comments accurately reflect the state

93. G. Baines, ‘The Origins of Urban Segregation: Local Government and the Residence of Africans in Port Elizabeth, 1835-1865,’ *SAHT*, 22(1990), 67-69.

94. Nigel Worden, Elizabeth van Heyningen, Vivian Bickford-Smith, *Cape Town: The Making of a City* (Claremont, S. Africa: David Philip Publishers, 1998), 111.

95. Backhouse, *Narrative*, 117-118.

96. *Ibid.*, 159.

97. Walker to George Richardson. 10 September 1839, Miscellaneous Letters, Box R4/5, Library of Friends; Backhouse, *Narrative*, 81.

98. *Ibid.*, 118-119.

99. Barker to Kitchingman, 23 Feb., 1842, *Kitchingman Papers*, 128-129.

of mind of the ex-slaves, they suggest deleterious psychological effects of slavery: former slaves would be reluctant to compete with and otherwise interact with whites. If this is true, it is an unsurprising outcome: the effects of slavery itself, with its toxic residue of white domination and black submission, inhibited integration.

Undermining Christian Community

The free interaction of Christians was to have a checkered history in South Africa.¹⁰⁰ It is not clear, for example, how far missionaries were willing to go in promoting this interaction. The LMS establishment, for example, did not look kindly on intermarriage. Wells argues that Read's marriage to a Khoisan woman, and more particularly his extramarital affair with another, became an excuse for 'taming' the van der Kemp and Read LMS faction, which advocated social interaction between whites and blacks and argued strenuously for equal treatment for blacks and Coloureds. And even though Read had his defenders, George Thom's notion that, according to Wells, interracial marriages 'were tantamount to living in sin' evidently still resonated with the LMS leadership.¹⁰¹ Edna Bradlow believes that there were enough mixed marriages in Cape Town for her to be able to suggest that intermarriage 'would seem to have been an acceptable social norm...',¹⁰² but this norm, if such it was, certainly would not have been accepted by all, and it is clear that some important missionaries rejected it.

John Philip believed, as we noted above, that some whites go to great lengths to prevent 'freedmen to gain anything ... by their freedom.' A comment by William Elliott, made several months after abolition, is also worth considering. Many whites in Paarl resisted meaningful freedom of servants and former slaves. Though a 'few respectable families among the whites' supported missionary efforts to improve the lives of the ex-slaves,

Every attempt at improving the state and elevating the character of the blacks is regarded here with jealousy; and every indication of success in such attempts rouses the most violent antipathy. A deplorable alienation has taken place between the whites and the blacks ...

Elliott went on to note that the Dutch Reformed minister at Paarl, who prior to abolition was a 'fanatical supporter of the Missionary cause', was hostile after abolition because, as the minister put it, of British missionaries' 'intimate connexion ... with the infernal principles of Liberalism.' After abolition this minister advocated merging the LMS mission with the Dutch Reformed Church and having freed people taught by a Dutch catechist. 'This is just what the whites

100. It is evident that more research is needed on this topic, but see, for example, John de Gruchy, *The Church Struggle in South Africa* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 14-16, and Andrew Paterson, 'Education and Segregation in a South African Mission Church: the Merger of the Anglican Church and the Order of Ethiopia,' *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 36 (2003), 585-605.

101. Wells, 'Scandal of Rev James Read,' 154.

102. Bradlow, 'Emancipation and Race Perceptions at the Cape' *SAHJ*, 15 (1983), 29.

would have, for they know perfectly well how it would go for the blacks, in respect to instruction, if such an arrangement were made.’¹⁰³

One wishes Elliott had elaborated. We can infer that he believed that the type of instruction the minister wanted involved creating a subservient mentality among the freed people, one in which, despite their freedom, they would continue as faithful workers for whites. This was undoubtedly the vision of integration held by many, and people like Elliott opposed it.

If it is true that Elliott’s notion of a post-emancipation society saw freed people as relatively independent economic entities, farming their own land and adopting European values, then his vision of independence took the form of a modified spatial separation, not integration. Several mission societies, as we noted above, created communities for freed people and Coloureds whose goal was this sort of independence, even as their culture came more to resemble Europeans. Thus missionaries’ actions to improve the material welfare of their charges, therefore, may also have inhibited the growth of integrated churches.

Andrew Bank argues persuasively that in the 1840s, Cape liberalism was undergoing a transformation. The relatively humane doctrine of the 1820s and 1830s that helped produce, among other initiatives, Ordinance 50, a free press, calls for tolerant treatment of Africans on the frontier, and slavery amelioration was giving way in the 1840s to a hard-nosed ‘liberalism of political economy’ that was more interested in economic growth, free trade and securing the frontier against marauding ‘savages’. It may be useful to see the effort of some missionaries to bring Coloured and African people into their communities as a part of the earlier humanitarian interlude.¹⁰⁴ There is evidence, incidentally, that a similar movement developed in Jamaica, led by missionaries.¹⁰⁵ But by the mid-1840s, the interlude had ended.

Thus many factors eventually stifled efforts to create a single Christian community. They included race prejudice, the poverty of the Khoisan and former slaves, a colonial culture worried about labor supplies, the trauma of wars with Africans on the frontier, and the reluctance and occasional hostility of the government and of the mission establishment itself. It is worth remembering, however, that not all missionaries were ‘tamed’, and that in the social ferment of the immediate aftermath of abolition, some had a different vision, one in which diverse races and ethnic groups would transcend their differences in one Christian community, and they tried, in their churches and schools, to realize it.

103. Elliott to LMS, Paarl, 20 Feb., 1835, CWM, #197.

104. A. Bank, ‘Liberals and Their Enemies: Racial Ideology at the Cape of Good Hope, 1820 to 1850,’ (Ph.D. dissertation, Cambridge University, 1995), Ch. 8, and Bank, ‘The Premature Decline of Humanitarian Liberalism at the Cape, 1840-1860,’ in Rick Halpern and Martin Daunton, eds., *Empire and Others* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1999).

105. See Catherine Hall, ‘William Knibb and the New Black Subject,’ in *ibid.*, 304-324. Hall does not, however, report zeal for racial integration in Jamaica, perhaps because there were so few whites there as to make the question moot.