

Bad Education: How British
Humanitarians Learnt Racism in the Empire 1840-1860.

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I want to tell the story of a colonial encounter. The story featured a missionary and a Xhosa chief--both of whom have been lost to British imperial history--who met at a small mission station just beyond the frontier of the Cape Colony in 1839.

It is a story of intellectual anxiety. Not the sort of story one commonly encounters in imperial historiography. But intellectual anxiety was a frequent by-product of colonial encounters--especially in the period of initial contact. It is also a small story. One of many such tales that I have stumbled upon in the course of research for a book on empire and national culture in the first half of the nineteenth century. But it is a story that discloses larger processes. And in particular it illuminates the demise of the humanitarian discourse of race relations in imperial culture and the consequent change in the category of race by the 1850s. ⁱ

Before I begin the story, however, let me briefly describe what I mean by “humanitarian discourse.” Five elements defined the humanitarian discourse. First, it was a discourse that was formulated by the anti-slavery debate from the 1780s. Second, by the early nineteenth century it had established itself as the dominant discourse for describing Britain’s relationship towards indigenous races. It reached its apogee of political influence in the Select Committee on Aborigines of 1837. By 1850, however, this genus of humanitarianism was no longer the arbitrating discourse for British attitudes towards indigenous races--although it had by no means disappeared, as the career of David Livingstone illustrated. Third, by the 1820s or so, the anti slavery issue was inseparable from evangelical religion. Fourth, humanitarian discourse believed in the commonality of the human experience and psyche. It believed that racial differentiation was cultural in content, not essential. And finally, the displacement and demise of this discourse as the dominant public discourse about empire from the late 1840s marked a profound shift in Victorian political and intellectual culture. We are accustomed to thinking about this shift as a function of intellectual currents in the metropole and to dating it around the time of the Indian rebellion of 1857. My argument is that this shift had as much to do with quotidian events in Empire as it did to grand intellectual currents or world shaking events like the mutiny. As such I offer this particular case as an example of that much-sought after scholarly connection of how the empire constitutes the metropole; or how the empire talks back to the center. ⁱⁱ

Now, let me return to the story, which is simply told. The missionary was the Reverend Henry Calderwood, late of Edinburgh. The Xhosa chief was Maqomawhose fixed abode changed at the whim of British frontier policy. Maqoma was one of the leading chiefs of the Rharhabe branch of the Xhosa people. He was generally regarded as the most powerful chief in Xhosaland. He was also feared as the most dangerous military opponent the British might face in any future war. ⁱⁱⁱ

We know about this encounter because Calderwood wrote about it in at least two places: first, in a couple of long letters to the secretary of the London Missionary Society, and second, in his account of his years as a missionary published in London in 1858. Both accounts are consistent and I shall draw upon them freely here. In addition, their credibility is reinforced by similarities with other such incidents that have also left their traces in the records. ^{iv}

Chief Maqoma of course left no written records. But we can understand his part in this encounter by contextualising it with other similar encounters and by reading Calderwood's account against the grain.

The incident in question occurred a few months after Calderwood had arrived at the mission station of Blinkwater as one of the latest batch of LMS missionaries. Blinkwater was close by Maqoma's kraal. After an initial reception from Maqoma that filled Calderwood full of hope for his conversion to christianity, Calderwood was shocked to learn that Maqoma had ordered the death of a child conceived in an adulterous relationship by one of his wives. Calderwood marched up to Maqoma's kraal and in front of his wives and counselors castigated him for being a murderer. Maqoma refused to answer the charge. But it was the aftermath that astonished Calderwood.

Maqoma failed to take his reprimand lying down. He gathered his ten wives with him, chased after Calderwood and confronted him in his house. He demanded that Calderwood identify the informant who had fed him his information. When Calderwood again accused him of murder, quoted the bible to him on matters of adultery and urged him to "flee from the wrath of God" Maqoma ignored this plea and instead began to contest Calderwood's theology. He turned the argument back onto Calderwood, accused him of defending sinful wives, of interfering with his rights as a chief and argued that since God had made him a chief he could govern his people and regulate his conduct as he liked.

This debate went on in one form or another for more than three days. After Maqoma had left Calderwood's house, he sent three of his counselors to continue the discussion. The issue turned on the rights of the missionary to interfere in the customary culture of the tribe as enforced by the chief. Ultimately, Maqoma sent three of his wives to smooth things over. ^v

It is fairly obvious what this spat was all about. For Calderwood it was a necessary intervention to challenge the uncivilized cultural practices of the Xhosa. For Maqoma, it was a challenge to the social and cultural authority of the chief. *[Infanticide was not a common practice amongst the Xhosa. Rather, the British thought the Xhosa coddled and spoiled their children. But an assault on a chief's wife was one of the more serious crimes in Xhosa culture. And adultery could be punished by death. None of this weighed much with Calderwood, however, who blithely asserted that adultery was common amongst the licentious Xhosa and Maqoma himself was one of the most enthusiastic practitioners.]* ^{vi}

This encounter caught my eye because of the impact it had on Calderwood. It shocked and destabilized him. The narratives he used to explain it to his superiors at the time and twenty years later in his autobiography illustrate the way it unsettled his mind. His initial recounting of the episode possessed an anxious, split quality. Although he presented himself to the secretary of the LMS as having achieved a partial victory over savagery, he admitted that the conflict had caused him “much trouble” and had almost forced him to leave the station. Still, he claimed his firmness had paid off. He reported his friendship with Maqoma had been revived, and that renewed efforts were being made to wean Maqoma from drink and root out witchcraft practices in the tribe. ^{vii}

In fact Calderwood was unable to convert the chief either then or later. And he failed to drive superstitious cultural practices from the tribe. Unsurprisingly, then, his descriptions of Maqoma’s arguments read much more like a defence of his own. He referred to the long arguments in which Calderwood threw biblical arguments at Maqoma and Maqoma threw them right back; how Maqoma was “hard pressed” and “made some . . . truly Caffrelike efforts to throw me on my back in the argument but did not succeed.” Twenty years later, he vividly recalled the “long and tiresome discussion” he had with the chief and the “desperate . . . efforts to worse me in argument, but did not succeed.”

Yet it turned out to be Calderwood who ran out of intellectual and emotional steam. He confessed to exhaustion, to feeling faint and weak. Indeed, so weak that he found it necessary to call out to God for help in meeting Maqoma’s arguments. And God did not fail him. “I was [then] enabled to be perfectly calm and sometimes had an answer for him which I felt was not supplied by my own skill or ingenuity.” ^{viii}

Calderwood was one of the better educated missionaries of the London Missionary Society. He held a BA from the University of Edinburgh. And for such a man to feel so powerless in the face of this uneducated Xhosa chief that he had to call on God for assistance suggests something very powerful was at work here. Where did this anxiety come from? It did not come from the horror of cultural practices like infanticide. For the putative infanticide soon drops out of a central place in the narrative. What set Calderwood back on his heels was the force of Maqoma’s intellect, whose power was such as to necessitate an appeal to God for assistance. Thus he was driven to admit that “it was no easy matter to conduct it [argument] with him in the peculiar circumstances. He is a clever man and his intellect on this occasion seemed whetted for the discussion.” ^{ix}

It is this reluctant, grudging, and uneasy admission that seems to me to be the significant and revealing fact of this encounter. Calderwood was fascinated with Maqoma. And, in this, I should note, Calderwood was not alone. We know from other similar confrontations that Maqoma possessed a powerful intellect capable of undermining the most self assured imperial

civiliser. Maqoma presented a real cognitive challenge for people like Calderwood. From Calderwood's perspective, he combined intellectual presence with moral degeneracy. How were these two properties to be reconciled? Thus, Calderwood's recounting of Maqoma constantly struggles to settle on a lasting characterization. Calderwood was unable to deny to himself the power of Maqoma's intellect. Twenty years after the event, he returned to tales that "reveal the wit, shrewdness and observation of Maqomo [whilst they also] present him in the lowest moral aspect." Yet, he was willing to quote Maqomo's insights as to the challenges that missionaries faced in trying to convert the Xhosa. This unsteady presentation provides a clue to what was truly disturbing about the encounter. ^x

Let us ask how Calderwood *could* have read the encounter with Maqoma. Calderwood went out to South Africa as a believer in the universal humanity of mankind. And given what we know of his theological and political world view, one possibility that comes to mind is that he *could* have read this encounter as confirmation of his belief in the essential humanity of the Xhosa. Of the fact that Maqoma was a man with an intellect just like Calderwood's, only more powerful. He *could* have understood Maqoma's bobbing and weaving in the face of Calderwood's relentless pressure on him to behave according to Christian precepts as the reactions of a chief who was trying to navigate between the alien presence of the British state and missionaries and the internal tribal politics of the Xhosa themselves. Yet he did not read it that way. Instead, these attributes are interpreted as reflecting the deep cunning and deceit of the xhosa character. Calderwood did not allow Maqoma to question his own assumptions and beliefs. Instead, he projected onto Maqoma his own ignorance and lack of understanding.

Let us stand back for a minute from the intimacies of this encounter and look at it in the context of the history of Calderwood's experience in Xhosaland. It turns out that this event was pivotal in changing Calderwood's relations with Xhosa culture as a whole. It marked a climax to a growing series of frustrations that Calderwood had experienced since his arrival at Blinkwater in early 1839. Calderwood had arrived in South Africa brimming with the self confidence of youth, with a full agenda and with a firm belief in the universal humanity of man and the limitless potential of the Gospel to open the hearts and minds of the Xhosa. He was particularly optimistic of his relationship with Maqoma and assured his superiors that the chief would soon be his friend and ally in the work of christianising the tribe. ^{xi}

But from the moment of the confrontation with Maqoma, things began to go wrong for Calderwood. His view of Maqoma began to change, as did his view of Xhosa culture generally. He began to fight with his fellow missionaries over questions of racial equality. In 1846 he left the ministry to become part of the imperial administration where he was an exponent of tough, harsh measures against the Xhosa. By the 1850s his belief system had changed from one that

allowed the Xhosa a humanity equal to that of white Britons to one that assumed their innate barbarism.^{xii} Let me briefly detail these shifts.

First, as to Maqoma, Calderwood was only the last in a long line of missionaries who had deluded themselves into thinking that Maqoma was about to be snared by the net of christianity. Maqoma had a long history of dancing with missionary hopes of conversion and an equally long history of escaping from their eager embrace. After the blow up, Calderwood's attitude towards Maqoma shifted pretty dramatically from open acceptance to deep disapproval. From being "the most important man in Caffreland who had the grace of God in his heart Maqoma became an untrustworthy, deceitful drunk. [*"I have ceased to hope for him. I do not believe him."* "*He certainly opposes the missionaries secretly. I do not place any confidence in him.*"]^{xiii}

Second, Calderwood began to reevaluate the civilizing potential of the missionary project amongst the Xhosa. He began to reexamine his belief in the universal humanity of man and the potential of the Xhosa to acquire Christian culture. The encounter with Maqoma undermined his world view. After this encounter, the tone of his reports to the LMS in London changed. They became more ruminative about the Xhosa, their culture, their chiefs and their customs. It is as if he was taking a second look, through a new lens. He was engaged in a deep internal struggle to understand his relationship to Xhosa society and, indeed, to comprehend what he was doing there.

Indeed, Calderwood now entered a period of emotional turmoil. This was a time of real despair, perhaps clinical depression.^{xiv} He frequently expresses his anguish about the futility of his work amongst the Xhosa: how "we labour without any success--which is the normal experience." And as he wrote later, in these early years he was "almost overwhelmed with a deep, depressing, crushing sense of my utter powerlessness in attempting to reach the heart of the people among whom I laboured." At such moments he and his wife could only overcome their despair by going out into the bush and in the open air, amidst the mimosa bushes, pour their hearts out to God.

His judgments become erratic and volatile, suggesting a displaced and destabilized intellectual framework. There are moments of optimism and glimpses of the universal humanitarianism that he brought with him on the boat from London. But they are followed by a withdrawal into contemplative pessimism.^{xv}

At exactly the same time his relationship with his colleagues began to deteriorate. He began to distance himself from the culture of racial equality and intimacy that marked the behaviour of the LMS frontier missionaries.^{xvi} By 1844 he was in open conflict with his missionary colleagues exactly over questions of racial equality. [*In early 1845 for no good reason, he precipitated a nasty smear campaign against the venerable James Read and his son,*

the premier LMS missionaries in the frontier zone. His objections to the Reads centered on their treatment of their coloured congregation as “brethren” and equals with the result that they became “spoilt and depraved.” Calderwood was determined to resist the same happening to the Xhosa.] ^{xvii}

By the time he came to summarize and explain his missionary experiences in the 1850s, Calderwood’s view of the Xhosa had stabilized into a set of new certainties. The heart of his position was that the Xhosa had no hearts contrary to what he had believed in 1839, their souls were not in fact waiting to receive the word of God. Indeed, their characters were insensate, which explained their cunning and deceitful evasion of missionary efforts to save them for Christ. Their behaviour was incorrigible. They were therefore inherently closed to the possibilities of the kind of gospel message he had brought with him from Britain in 1839. As he put it, in what is the most revealing comment of all, they “may be said to have *refused* the gospel.”

In simple terms he had become a modern racist. He now saw the Xhosa as essentially different. His experience with Maqoma was presented as evidence of their inability to receive the civilizing mission. “Soon after I went to reside near Maqomo, I was painfully made to understand some of the worst features of the social state of Caffraria.” At first “the chief really seemed as though he were interested in the word of God.” But this was all a sham. The confrontation over the adulterous wife revealed the truth to Calderwood that Maqoma was dishonest and duplicitous.

Once the scales had fallen from his eyes about Maqoma, he could now see that Xhosa culture itself was constructed around deceit and duplicity. Once he had reached that insight, he was could understand and explain difficulties he and other missionaries faced in Xhosaland. Particularly their failure to convert the Xhosa on the scale they had originally expected. To Calderwood, this could now be explained by the machinations of chiefs like Maqoma--their deceptive cunning and trickery--and by the inherent nature of Xhosa culture and character. Calderwood was thus able to project responsibility for his own depression in the mid 1840s onto the Xhosa. And it was but a small step from here to concluding that the Gospel could not prevail amongst the Xhosa, “while Caffre institutions remain entire.” Xhosa culture and custom, the political manipulations and evasions of chiefs like Maqoma were impermeable to persuasion. The logic of Calderwood’s position was that Xhosa institutions and culture needed to be changed by main force. ^{xviii}

By this time, of course, Calderwood’s perspective had become the defining view of Xhosa culture and society in imperial culture. ^{xix} But I think it useful to stick with Calderwood a bit in order to understand the predicament he and others faced as they encountered the realities of empire.

Let us note that Calderwood's predicament was not unusual. The archives are full of stories of the destabilizing effects of the colonial encounter on British minds. Some directly paralleled Calderwoods. Thus, briefly, the story of William Shrewsbury, a Methodist missionary who arrived in South Africa in 1829. He had earlier been in the West Indies where his vocal support for the slaves so aggravated the white colonists that he had been literally chased off Barbados and his chapel had been burnt by a rampaging mob. He went to Xhosaland full of a generosity of spirit and expectation that progressively drained away as he encountered Xhosa argumentativeness about religion, evasiveness regarding changing their cultural practices, and resistance to his political presence in the tribe. By 1835, Shrewsbury had become an adviser to the Governor, D'Urban, and an advocate of a policy of repression which included imprisonment without trial. Indeed, he departed so far from even the Methodist missionary political spectrum that he was called home in disgrace, strongly censured, and sent to minister to the lost souls of Calais, France. ^{xx}

But, second, such transitions from universal humanitarianism to modern racism were not preordained. There was not some kind of programmed Orientalism in such heads. Obviously, not all missionaries responded to the challenges of the colonial encounter in the same way that Calderwood and Shrewsbury did. Not all brought the same ideological packages with them to the frontier either. There were differences in theology and ideology between the LMS missionaries and other denominations. But at this period such distinctions were less important than they were to subsequently become. All faced the physical and spiritual challenges of their encounter with the rough and dangerous frontier zone. Nothing in their training as missionaries prepared them for it. Missionaries arrived from Britain with the core assumptions that all they needed to do to colonise minds was to preach the word of God and that the Xhosa had the grace of god in their hearts which would be unlocked upon exposure to the Gospel. ^{xxi}

There was another thing that is important to note. Calderwood was part of a generation of missionaries that arrived at the Cape with a capacious view of the possibilities of their ministry. They wanted to observe and engage with the Xhosa, and if you follow them through their letters, diaries and archives, you can actually see them doing that. It is as if there was an open space in their minds that they imagined would be filled by a creative and ultimately fruitful encounter with the Xhosa. They found that encounter readily enough, but they were presented with a more sophisticated and complicated polity than they could ever have imagined. The way Maqoma responded to Calderwood's presence was quite typical of the response of chiefs to the missionaries. He both welcomed and was suspicious of Calderwood; he led Calderwood to believe that he was receptive to the Christian message, but then he drew back; he invited Calderwood to tell him when he was doing wrong, and then he resisted Calderwood's moral guidance. He was alternatively friendly and welcoming, and then sullen and hostile. He was

argumentative, and it is clear from Calderwood's distress that his arguments were effective. The Xhosa were regarded by the British as having a lawyer like ability to argue and dispute. And Maqoma provided plenty of evidence of that attribute throughout his history with the British. ^{xxii}

So the Calderwood-Maqoma story reveals the predicament faced by missionary culture and indeed by imperial culture generally as it encountered the Xhosa. A crisis of cognition was sparked. Calderwood's trauma was caused by the dislocation of the knowledge system that he brought with him from Britain as it encountered the facts of Xhosa society and culture. As he struggled against the weight of the task that confronted him, he sought to bring his belief system into line with his cultural and intellectual understanding. One way to do this was to demonise the chiefs and chiefly power. This provided a simple answer as to who was to blame for his failure to secure more conversions, for his failure to persuade the Xhosa to abandon their cultural practices, and for his failure in his personal relations with Maqoma. From his experience with Maqoma, Calderwood took the lesson that the chiefs recognized the threat posed to traditional customs from the missionary presence and secretly and covertly stirred up opposition. Calderwood was not alone in this belief, either. This analysis was about to become a dominant element in the discourse of imperial culture at the frontier. ^{xxiii}

The central fact about British culture when it arrived at the frontier in the form of missionary belief or other iterations was that it was unable to accommodate the difference presented by Xhosa politics and culture. It was unable to sustain its faith in the universal humanity of mankind in the face of evidence of that humanity. This is the key lesson to be drawn from the Calderwood-Maqoma encounter, and others like it. It was Maqoma's independence of spirit--what Calderwood came to understand as evasion and deceit--that could not be accommodated. And this was significant both for the missionary project at this moment in time and for the wider question of the construction of an imperial culture.

And so I want to conclude by bringing this story back into the wider world. Calderwood's story did not just belong to him; it was a story that exposed in microcosm what we might call the psychic dynamics of humanitarian ideology as a whole in this period.

First, the mental climate of missionary culture altered over the period 1820-1850s. There was a retreat from the initial optimism that accompanied the beginnings of LMS missionary effort in South Africa. Expectations of universal or mass conversion were scaled back. The result was that the missionary project became sect like, satisfying itself with limited conversions from those who were alienated in some way from their tribes. Missionary culture closed in on itself. Just as Calderwood retreated to the intellectual safety of an imperial culture that blamed the Xhosa for his failures, missionaries who stuck with the project turned to the safety of their own, diminished world.

This is a shift that leaps out at from the missionary archives of this period. At the beginning of the period those archives reveal a missionary culture that observed, engaged and challenged Xhosa culture. Xhosa cultural practices or interventions by the missionary are recorded in great detail. The difficulties of dealing with this chief or that tribe are commented on, as are the virtues or deficiencies of the imperial administration. By the 1850s this sense of engagement has disappeared. It is a remarkable fact that if we were to rely upon the archives of the London Missionary Society to write the history of the Xhosa in the 1850s, we would hardly notice the great cattle killing delusion in 1856-57 which was *the* turning point in modern Xhosa history. Instead, what dominates those archives are matters internal to the missionary enterprise. The reports sent home are now more routine reports on such matters as the progress in building a school or numbers attending services. There are no stories about difficult chiefs, or brave confrontations with superstitious customs. ^{xxiv}

Now at one level what we see here is a deflation of missionary enthusiasm, a readjustment of expectations in the face of unanticipated circumstances. But it was more than that. It reflected the construction of a new knowledge system about the Xhosa, new ways of understanding and reading Xhosa culture and behaviour. Calderwood both reflected and contributed to this new knowledge system which begins to be elaborated from the late 1840s. In place of a belief system that was optimistic and hopeful, a knowledge system was erected that consigned Xhosa culture and politics to a tenebrous world that was impenetrable by the reason of religion. The main foundation of this new knowledge system was the inherent deceit and cunning that marked the Xhosa off from civilised cultures.

What is noteworthy about the process that I have sketched here is precisely the bad education of my title. One can say that the conversion of Calderwood and imperial culture generally to this racially essentialised view of the Xhosa, marked an end to the search for knowledge and understanding of the Xhosa and the settlement of a view of the Xhosa that rested on ignorance. A belief system was erected whose practice was to protect itself by reflecting back onto the colonised its own presumptions and ignorance. It was a belief system that was dependent upon *not knowing* its subjects and a belief system that is designed to preserve that state of ignorance. ^{xxv}

But, this story also suggests how imperial culture has to *learn* ignorance. By that I mean that the creation of a view of the Xhosa proceeded *from* knowledge *to* ignorance. The initial interaction with the Xhosa was a period of learning. The missionaries, for example, did try to learn Xhosa. They formulated a written language--although, no doubt, they distorted its orthography. But their failure to transcend the limitations of their own world view--the failure for example to accommodate polygamy which I do not have time to talk about here--led them to collapse into ignorance about the Xhosa. It led them to construct a view of Xhosa politics and

culture that cast it as irredeemable and intransigent. This was, of course, a projection of their own failures. It was premised on ignorance.^{xxvi}

Third, the final point I want to make is how this story illuminates the demise of humanitarian ideology within British imperial culture as a whole. We tend to see the shift to an essentialised racial ideology in the mid nineteenth century as a function of the swinging pendulum of intellectual thought in the metropole. Of Carlyle's descent from the negro to the nigger question. But what this episode suggests is how humanitarianism *imploded from within as it faced the colonial encounter*. The collapse of missionary culture into a view of Xhosa culture as intractable and inherently opaque was a necessary foundation for the racialized essentialism that came to dominate imperial culture from the 1850s. This collapse surrendered an earlier optimistic view missionaries held of the Xhosa. Indeed, by the 1850s, missionary humanitarianism had become so degraded that it accepted almost without comment the destruction of Xhosa society that was implemented by Sir George Grey on the backs of the cattle killing.

So this story is also a story of the wider demise of humanitarianism in British politics. The collapse of the humanitarian ideology in the 1840s was a major theme in the political history of both South Africa and the United Kingdom.^{xxvii} It was a process that occurred both at the frontier of empire and in the metropole. But as my story illustrates the demise of humanitarian politics was not simply the result of political and intellectual processes in the metropole, nor even the relentless attacks of the notoriously vile settler politics of the Eastern Cape. Its collapse was also internal. Humanitarianism lost its beliefs. And once it did so the door opened to the ideology of racial essentialism.

Notes

ⁱ Others, of course, have addressed this general story, but mostly from the standpoint of South African history. It also a story that belongs to British history. See Clifton Crais, White Supremacy and Black Resistance (Cambridge, 1992); Timothy Keegan's excellent general account, Colonial South Africa and the Origins of the Racial Order (Cape Town, 1996). For a slightly different focus on the Khoesan, see Elizabeth Elbourne, Blood Ground. Colonialism, Missions, and the Contest for Christianity in the Cape Colony and Britain, 1799-1853 (Kingston, 2002).

ⁱⁱ There is of course a large body of literature on anti-slavery and humanitarianism generally. For a partial list see, David Brion Davis, The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution 1770-1823 (Ithaca, 1975); David Turley, The Culture of English Antislavery 1780-1860 (London, 1991); Christine Bolt, Victorian Attitudes to Race (London, 1971), Douglas Lorrimer, Victorians and Race (London, 1975); Seymore Drescher, Capitalism and Antislavery (Oxford, 1986); Howard Temperley, British Antislavery 1833-1870 (London, 1972). This is too short a summary to do justice to the complexities of the discussion on race during this period and is in danger of conveying too sharp and neat a break between the dominance of humanitarian and racial essentialist discourses. Humanitarianism was still capable of vocal protest into the 1860s, as debates in the Anthropological Society in 1863-64 illustrate. But my argument is not that it disappeared, but rather that it was displaced.

ⁱⁱⁱ There is a certain irony in the fact that more is known about Maqoma--who has been the subject of one major biography--than about Calderwood. See Timothy Stapleton, Maqoma. Xhosa Resistance to Colonial Advance 1798-1873 (Parklands, South Africa, 1994). See South African Dictionary of National Biography for Calderwood

^{iv} Calderwood's account of his years in Xhosaland was published as Caffres and Caffre Missions (London, 1858). Other sources that tell similar stories include Volume I of the Journals of Reverend James Laing, at the Cory Library, Rhodes University; Glasgow Missionary Society, Minutes of the Presbytery of Caffraria 1824-1844, also at the Cory Library; Rev. George Brown, Personal Adventures in South Africa (London, 1855); and various files in the archives of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, and the London Missionary Society, both held at SOAS.

^v See, Council for World Missions, London Missionary Society Archives, Africa, South Africa, Incoming Correspondence, [Henceforth, LMS Archives, Correspondence] Box 16, Folder 3, Calderwood to Ellis 30 December 1839, 14 January 1840. These archives are held at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. Calderwood, Caffres and Caffre Missions, pp. 65-72. Stapleton, Maqoma, pp. 117-18, 121-22.

^{vi} See John Maclean, A Compendium of Kafir Law and Customs, Including Genealogical Tables of the Kafir Chiefs and Various Tribal Census Returns (Mt. Coke, 1858), pp.34-35, 110-12. Stephen Kay, Travels and Researches in Caffraria (London, 1833), p.157-58. Contemporary discussion of Xhosa moral codes is extremely confused and it is quite common for diametrically different claims to be made about, for example, their attitude to adultery. Some claimed it was very rare, others that it was very common. And as an illustration of the instability of such colonial knowledge, these different views could be held by the same person. Thus, contrast Kay, Travels and Researches op.cit and Kay A Succinct Statement of the Kaffer's Case (London, 1837), pp. 70-87. The important point, however, is that by the 1840s the consensus view that it was endemic was rapidly attaining a hegemonic status.

^{vii} LMS Correspondence, Box 16, Folder 3, Calderwood to Ellis, 14 January 1840.

^{viii} LMS Correspondence, Box 16, Folder 3, Calderwood to Ellis, 30 December 1839; Calderwood, Caffres and Caffre Missions, pp. 70-72.

^{ix} Calderwood, Caffres and Caffre Missions, op.cit.

^x See Calderwood, Caffres and Caffre Missions, pp. 73-75, 98. On another occasion, Calderwood characterized Maqoma as “occasionally deranged, intemperate; potentially very dangerous; very clever; some medical men consider him insane. He should be kept in the colony to be watched.” See, CA, GH8/46 Letters of the Reverend H. Calderwood, 8 January 1847. Calderwood was not the only one who could not suppress his recognition of Maqoma’s dignity and intellect; it was a common observation from all who came into contact with him even if it was combined with condemnation. See, Rev. George Brown, Personal Adventures in South Africa (London, 1853), pp.200-202: “Naked barbarian though he be, Macomo has an intellectual character, that well entitles him to the consideration of any one capable of estimating man by this standard; he can both give and understand a reason.”

^{xi} Indeed, in the early months, Calderwood several times took Maqoma’s side against vindictive frontier officials. Calderwood, Caffres and Caffre Missions, pp.55, 60; LMS Correspondence, Calderwood to Ellis, 28 June 1839; Basil Le Cordeur and Christopher Saunders, The Kitchingman Papers (Johannesburg, 1976), pp.208-209.

^{xii} See Cape Archives [Henceforth, CA], GH8/46, Letters of Reverend Henry Calderwood 1847 for plenty of evidence as to Calderwood’s support and practice of a harsh frontier policy. For his view of the Xhosa by 1858 see Caffres and Caffre Missions, pp.49, 54-56,62, 138-39, passim.

^{xiii} LMS Correspondence, Box 16, Folder 3, Calderwood to Ellis, 28 June 1839, 14 Jan 1840; Box 19, Folder 1, Calderwood to Tidman, 13 March 1843; Box 22, Folder 1, 2 March 1846.

^{xiv} There is very good evidence elsewhere to suggest that psychological turmoil was not unusual amongst missionaries in their initial contact with the Xhosa. See J.F. Cumming, Diaries 1836-1840 held in manuscript in the National Library of South Africa, Cape Town.

^{xv} Thus, in March 1843 he notes approvingly a sermon by a native teacher which preached that distinctions between people lay in the quality of their souls, not in the colour of their skins. But in the same letter he signals a retreat from his previously unqualified enthusiasm for native agency, arguing that it is a subject “that will require to be handled with great care. . . it would be very easy to do more harm than good.” See LMS Correspondence, Box 19, Folder 1, Calderwood to Tidman 13 March 1843, Box 19, Folder 2, 12 June 1843, Caffres and Caffre Missions, p 99. In addition to the persistent complaints in the missionary archives about the difficulties of conversions, there is a considerable secondary literature on the question. One of the best pieces in Hildegard Fast, “‘In At One Ear and Out at the Other’: African Response to the Wesleyan Message in Xhosaland 1825-1835,” Journal of Religion in Africa, XXIII, 2 (1993). The question of the reception of the missionary religious message is, of course, more complicated than a matter of rejection or acceptance. It is certainly the case that christianity was absorbed into African religious practice and syncretised. But that was precisely the problem in this period. Missionaries were not interested in creating a hybridised version of christianity. Only later does missionary culture implicitly and largely silently accept that reality. On this question in India see Jeffrey Cox’s Imperial Faultlines. Christianity and Colonial Power in India, 1818-1940 (Stanford, CA., 2002). The literature on African religion is enormous. But see Janet Hodson, “Soga and Dukwana: The Christian Struggle for Liberation in Mid-Nineteenth Century South Africa,” Journal of Religion in Africa, XVI, 3 (1986). See also Paul Landau,

^{xvi} He seized the opportunity to spend a year in Cape Town in 1842 and reluctantly returned to the frontier. His sojourn in Cape Town may have accelerated his changing perspectives. Certainly, on his return to mission work his enthusiasm for native agency began to wane. Whilst in Cape Town, Calderwood published a book on prayer which is interesting because it reflects the internal debate that is going on within him about the appropriateness of the humanitarian discourse. On the one hand he asserts a belief in the power of prayer to convert; on the other hand he dismisses those “sentimental philanthropists” who believe that all the evils on the

frontier come from the settler classes. See, The Christian's Stronghold and Means of Triumph (Cape Town, 1842), pp.88-90, 100.

^{xvii} Read wrote to Kitchingman in February 1845 how his esteem for Calderwood had been cruelly dashed: "His temper is unbearable; he is haughty. I have had to work hard to reconcile the people [congregations] to him." See Le Cordeur, Kitchingman Papers, pp. 243-54; LMS, Correspondence, Box 21, Folder 1, Philip to Directors, 8 February 1845; Cumming to Philip, 10 February 1845, Box 21, Folder 2, Philip to Directors, 25 March 1845, Box 22, Folder 1, James Read Snr. to Directors 31 March 1846. On the split within the Grahamstown ministers regarding mixed congregations see essays by Elizabeth Elbourne and Robert Ross in John de Gruchy, the London Missionary Society in South Africa. Historical Essays in Celebration of the Bicentenary of the LMS in Southern Africa 1799-1999. (Cape Town, 1999).

^{xviii} For the preceding paragraphs see Calderwood, Caffres and Caffre Missions, pp. 65-72, 77-90, 96, 210-11.

^{xix} Perhaps the best statement of official thinking on the Xhosa by this time is to be found in Maclean, Compendium of Kafir Laws and Customs which was compiled by Colonel John Maclean, a leading imperial administrator on the frontier since the mid 1840s and Chief Commissioner of British Kaffraria 1852-1864. It contains essays by long serving missionaries and agents with the tribes and thus represents the best of what was "known" about the Xhosa at this time. For the best summary of missionary view of Xhosa culture and society see W. C. Holden, The Past and Future of the Kaffir Races (Cape Town 1866, repr. 1963). It is worth noting that this was true even amongst the Glasgow Missionary Society who remained pro-Xhosa longer than any other group of missionaries on the frontier. Thus, in July 1842 the Kaffrarian presbytery of the GMS remarked how the example of the few Xhosa converts seems to leave no imprint on the "multitude of natives around this station [who] . . . shall die in their sins. O that God for Christ's sake would send down the healing influences of his spirit on the sterile moral desert." See Minutes of the Glasgow Missionary Society Presbytery of Kaffraria 1842-1847, 6 July 1847.

^{xx} See the excellent edited version of Shrewsbury's journal and letters Hildegard H. Fast, The Journal and Selected Letters of Rev. William J. Shrewsbury 1826-1835 (Johannesburg, 1994). For Shrewsbury's humanitarian theology and politics before he came to South Africa, see Rev. William Shrewsbury, Sermons Preached on Several Occasions in the Island of Barbados (London, 1825). His expulsion from Barbados was the subject of questions in the House of Commons. For Shrewsbury's later position as a racial essentialist, see Rev. William J. Shrewsbury, War, A Means of Advancing the Kingdom of Christ. A Sermon (London, 1854), pp. 7-8 which although preached around the issue of the Crimean War had as its main focus the incorrigible nature of African souls and the necessity of force to wipe out the cultural barriers to conversion. For Shrewsbury's memo to D'Urban regarding future treatment of the Xhosa see CA, GH 28/12/1 Enclosures to Despatches, 1833-38. Two other confrontations would also reward further study: that between J.G. Weir and Mhala, the chief of the Ndlambe Xhosa and that between Soga, an important counsellor to Sandili and Reverend George Brown. Details of those events are to be found in the Minutes of the Presbytery of Kaffraria held at Rhodes University's Cory Institute of Historical Research, and Brown, Personal Adventures, pp. 150, 154-55, 157-58, 170, 301-302.

^{xxi} The literature on missionaries in southern Africa is quite extensive. The best in my view are the following: Jean and John Comaroff, Of Revelation and Revolution. Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa, Vol I (Chicago, 1991) and Of Revelation and Revolution. The Dialectics of Modernity on a South African Frontier, Volume II (Chicago, 1997); the essays in Richard Elphick and Rodney Davenport Christianity in South Africa

(Berkeley, 1997); Donovan Williams, When Races Meet (Johannesburg, 1967); Monica Wilson, Religion and the Transformation of Society (Cambridge, 1971). Elizabeth Elbourne's masterly study Blood Ground (Kingston, Ontario, 2002) also has a lot to say on this issue.

^{xxii} The difficulties that missionaries had in dealing with the Xhosa chiefs are well documented in virtually all missionary archives and accounts of these years. They were not, of course, peculiar to the Xhosa. For just a sample see, W.D. Hammond-Tooke (ed.), The Journal of William Shaw (Cape Town, 1972); Peter Hinchliff (ed.), The Journal of John Ayiff 1820-1830 (Cape Town) 1971; LMS, Africa, Southern Outgoing Correspondence 1834-1837, Ellis to Kayser, 2 feb. 1835; LMS Correspondence, Box 16, Folder I, Kayser to Ellis, 7 August 1838.

^{xxiii} LMS Correspondence, Box 19 Folder 1, Calderwood to Tidman, 12 June 1843. What we have described here, of course, stands also as an example of how stereotyping is created in colonial discourse. See Homi Bhaba, The Location of Culture (London, 1994), chap. 3

^{xxiv} For the cattle killing, see the classic account by J.B. Peires, The Dead Will Arise. Nongqawuse and the Great Xhosa Cattle-Killing Movement of 1856-7 (Johannesburg, 1989). The absence of the cattle killing from the missionary archives is all the more remarkable in light of the fact that missionary conversions amongst the Xhosa increase markedly after this event. Given the lack of notice of the cattle killing in missionary letters and reports, it is scarcely surprising that groups like the Aborigines Protection Society also hardly noticed it. The position of the Aborigines Protection Society was even worse than this implies. It strongly supported Sir George Grey, Governor of the Cape 1854-1861, who ruthlessly used the cattle killing to destroy the civic and political institutions of the Xhosa. Grey's career as the archetypal mid-Victorian liberal imperialist would be worth a reexamination.

^{xxv} It is also a property that belongs more to the coloniser than the colonised. Even at this stage the colonised knew much more about the coloniser than the reverse. Maqoma recognized this. Another missionary had a similar encounter with Maqoma during the war of 1850-53. Whilst under the chief's protection, George Brown was unexpectedly taken to meet Maqoma who subjected him to a harangue about how missionary behaviour failed to match the humanity of the Xhosa; how, in spite of the fact that they had always been protected by the Xhosa in times of war, they had always run away to British military camps. "I am doubtful whether any of you be true men of peace" Maqoma claimed, noting how they all ran off to military camps at times of war. James Read, he conceded was a man of peace, "but look at Calderwood; what have you to say about him--did he not come as a teacher? Now he is a magistrate--one of those who make war." Brown, Personal Adventures, pp.75-6. It is also worth noting that Maqoma was not only smarter than most missionaries; he also had greater humanity. Thus, in the early 1830s J.D. Laing, another LMS missionary, reported how Maqoma had argued to him that "at least we [missionaries] ought to let them [Xhosa] go on without annoyance [in their religious practices] as they don't annoy us in our worship."

^{xxvi} This pattern of engagement, interest and observation receding into bored, stereotyped staring is a common pattern in colonial encounters. Thus, the change recorded in Captain James Cook's attitude towards south seas natives over his three voyages. See Nicholas Thomas, Cook. The Extraordinary Voyages of Captain James Cook (Toronto, 2003). Although they did not use the wording of Sir Benjamin D'Urban's famous 1835 characterisation of the Xhosa as "irreclaimable" savages, missionary culture had, in fact, come around to this position by the 1850s.

^{xxvii} This is a subject that has been treated more in South African scholarship than in British. See, Clifton Crais, White Supremacy and Black Resistance in Pre-Industrial South Africa. The Making of the Colonial Order in the Eastern Cape 1770-1865 (Cambridge 1992) for an ambitious account of this process that focusses mainly on political economy. Timothy Keegan, Colonial South Africa and the Origins of the Racial Order (Charlottesville, VA., 1996) which rightly emphasises the British origins of South African racial culture and policy. Catherine Hall,

Civilising Subjects. Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination 1830-1867 (Cambridge, 2002) which treats the issue from the perspective of British provincial culture. For a recent account of one aspect of this issue see Patrick Brantlinger, Dark Vanishings. Discourse on the Races, 1800-1930 (Ithaca, NY, 2003).

