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PAGES FROM A SCHOOL REGISTER¹

Appropriately, as I was putting the finishing touches to this guest editorial today, a little volume entitled *Excellence in Theological Education* by Steven A. Hardy landed on my desk. I look forward to reading it. Scottish Presbyterians of the nineteenth century also highly prized intellectual excellence; unsurprisingly, therefore, a main plank of Scottish missionary strategy during the second half of the century was the cultivation of intelligence, particularly in the case of the children of higher placed members of the indigenous society. It was hoped that this would produce a trickle-down effect whereby society generally would be permeated by an intelligent Christianity. Though the strategy is somewhat discredited today, its implementation led to the establishment of important schools. In 1830, Alexander Duff, the Church of Scotland's first missionary, oversaw the setting up of the General Assembly's Institution in Calcutta; John Wilson was in charge of the General Assembly's English School in Bombay; and as late as the 1920s the Free Church of Scotland, under the leadership of John A MacKay founded in Lima, Peru, the Colegio Anglo Peruana as a centre for progressive educational ideas. Now known as Colegio San Andres, the school continues to function, more or less, on the old philosophy. But perhaps the jewel in the crown was the Lovedale Missionary Institute in South Africa's Cape Province.

The Lovedale mission station, named after John Love, secretary of the Glasgow Missionary Society, was established in 1826 by two of the society's missionaries, John Ross and John Bennie, as an outgrowth of the earlier work of John Brownlee. In 1841 William Govan arrived to take on leadership of the new institution and was succeeded in 1870 by the redoubtable James Stewart, who had joined the staff in 1867 and had been David Livingstone's companion on the ill fated Zambezi expedition.

Stewart's policy at Lovedale was the provision of a comprehensive liberal education, available equally to children of African and European parentage; the only segregation being in the dormitories. When Stewart's biographer, James Wells, visited Lovedale in 1905 he 'saw Stewart's grandson in a class alongside of [Xhosa] boys' and was so impressed with the standard of the teaching that he commented to the students that not only had they better opportunities of education than he had himself, but that education was fitted to deliver them from 'their self-despising and the despising of the whites'.²

¹ Cory Library for Historical Research, MS16 291.

² J. Wells, *The Life of James Stewart* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1909), p.189.

Today, much of the Lovedale archive is lodged in the splendid Cory Library for Historical Research at Rhodes University in Grahamstown. Researching the life of a Lovedale teacher and Africa's first woman doctor, Jane Elizabeth Waterston, I recently requested the class register for 1860-1880. I was curious to see what might be deduced from Waterston's comments revealing how a mid-nineteenth century, middle class Invernesian related to girls largely from a rural Xhosa background. In fact the poorly indexed volume contained nothing of interest in that regard, but what did catch my eye was four consecutive pages with brief, matter-of-fact accounts of four of the most influential Xhosa students of their generation: Mpambani Mzimba, Elijah Makiwane, John Knox Bokwe and William Koyi.

Mpambani Mzimba was admitted in July 1860, aged 11, with the ability 'to read a little English and write fairly'. In 1865 he entered the printing department but, wanting to train for the ministry, was permitted to attend classes. In 1871 he attained prizes for zoology and in 1873 for theology and church history. On leaving he was ordained on 2nd December, 1873 as minister of Lovedale Native Congregation. Stewart lamentably failed to be present and Jane Waterston scolded him for his neglect, 'Your being away for Mpanbani's [sic] ordination gave me great pain...Mpambani said little about it...Perhaps it is because I am a woman, but I would allow people to think what they liked before I had wounded...such a faithful, loving heart as Mpambani's.'³ Two notes follow to the effect that he was the first ordained native minister in connection with the Free Church Mission in South Africa and that he married an old Lovedale girl, one of Jane Waterston's pupils, Martha Kwabsha. In 1893 Mazimba visited Scotland to take part in the Free Church's 50th anniversary celebrations but in 1898, owing to the failure to treat 'native' ministers equally with whites, he left to form the Bantu Presbyterian Church.

Elijah Makiwane, born around 1850, was first educated by Methodists at Healdtown but at fourteen he ran away and sought entrance to Lovedale with 'no certificate of character or letter of introduction'. He was admitted to the Preparatory School in August, 1865. At first the opinion of his ability was low, 'very defective in the most elementary branches, so much so that there was hesitation in admitting him, but he soon showed 'a marked diligence and was thoroughly reliable, trustworthy and ultimately took himself to study for the ministry'. Between 1871 and 73 he obtained prizes for moral philosophy, political economy, natural philosophy, logic, theology and church history. On leaving Lovedale in 1873 he became editor

³ L. B. and E. van Heyningen, eds., *The Letters of Jane Elizabeth Waterston, 1866-1905* (Van Riebeeck Society, 1983), p. 96.

of *Isidigimi Sama Xosa*, the Lovedale isiXhosa newspaper, a post he held for a number of years. In 1877 he was ordained minister of the Macfarlan congregation. He too married an old Lovedale girl, Maggie Magizima.

John Knox Bokwe was born at Lovedale on 15th March, 1855. In the register, his parents are described as Christian with the *proviso* that 'his father did not continue steadfast, but his mother is a woman of high Christian character'. His father Jacob had been one of the very first Lovedale students when it opened in 1841. Admitted to the preparatory school, aged ten, John stated that his aim was to be a teacher, but this was subsequently changed to 'general usefulness to my countrymen'. Three years later he entered the college department but there is no record of prizes obtained. On completing his education he was employed at Lovedale as a clerk, marrying Lettie Neini, yet another old Lovedale girl who had for nine years been a maid to Mrs Stewart, in whose company she had visited Scotland. The slightly built Bokwe was a highly gifted poet and musician with a fine tenor voice, and became the most celebrated hymn writer in isiXhosa, not only composing many hymns and choral works, but also writing the biography of Ntsikana (1780-1820), the evangelist and first Xhosa hymn writer, producing a fine setting of Ntsikana's great hymn, *Ulothixo Omkhulu* (The Great God). In 1885 Bokwe published his own compositions *Amaculo ase Lovedale* (Lovedale Songs).⁴ Their five children contributed in such fields as education, medicine and African politics; Roseberry, born in 1900, becoming active in the African National Congress.

William Koyi, was born about 1847 near the Berlin Mission Society's Dohne Mission Station, near Stutterheim, and had no education before coming to Lovedale. The register provides a tantalising insight into his spiritual journey, stating in what seems to be Koyi's *ipsissima verba* that 'on the 11th June 1869 [I] washed off the red blanket and began to attend to the concerns of my soul'. The blanket covered with red ochre being the badge of the followers of traditional Xhosa religion. His sole aim for attending Lovedale was 'to join mission work as a preacher'. In 1876 he and three other Xhosa students joined James Stewart, Jane Waterston, Robert Laws and others in the Livingstonia mission to the Ngoni people in what is now Malawi. The register adds, 'He has continued working most faithfully in that mission field (1880).' Today Koyi is feted by Ma-

⁴ Cf. Dictionary of African Biography at http://www.dacb.org/stories/southafrica/bokwe_johnknox.html

lawian Presbyterians as a founder of their church and his grave at Njuyu is still attended.⁵

The Lovedale Missionary Institution gave rise, in the late nineteenth century, to a Xhosa Christian intelligentsia. This network of gifted intellectuals, whose influence touched and enriched the lives of thousands, included, as well as the four mentioned, such luminaries as Tiyo Soga, the first Xhosa minister and translator of *The Pilgrims Progress* into Xhosa, and his Scottish-educated son, the ethnologist, Dr. John Henderson Soga; newspaper columnist and minister, Isaac Williams Wauchope; Tengo Jabavu, the founder of South Africa's first black newspaper, *Imvo Zabantsundu*, and his son Professor Davidson Don Tengo Jabavu, founder of the All-African National Convention (AANC) and Professor of Latin and Bantu languages at the University of Fort Hare. Additionally, Gwayi Tyamzashe, William Wellington Gqoba, Elijah Makiwane, and Walter B. Rubusana were all prominent in this Xhosa renaissance. It was Bokwe's son-in-law, the educationalist, church leader and African nationalist, Z. K. Matthews who once described them all as 'leaders [who] drank deep at the springs of western civilisation and yet...remained true Africans, loyal to the best traditions of their people and good examples of what has been described as the African personality.'

In later decades these eminent Christians, bravely grappling with the challenges of modernity and black identity, were cruelly deprived of a voice, but today merit a fresh hearing both in Africa and wider afield, as well. It is a cause of much thankfulness that *The Journal and Writings of Soga*, *The Selected Writings of Wauchope* and *The Letters of Waterston* have all been made available through the excellent work of the Van Riebeeck Society and Rhodes University's Graham's Town Series. Not only so, but there continues to be a distinctive, contemporary Xhosa spiritual and intellectual contribution in the church today.

Dr John Ross
King William's Town, South Africa

⁵ Cf. J. Thompson *Touching the Heart: Xhosa Missionaries to Malawi, 1876-1888* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 2000), p. 99f.